



CHICAGO: MORRILL, HIGGINS & CO.

A new book by the author of "Poems of Passion."

MEN, WOMEN AND EMOTIONS

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

12mo., Paper, 50 cents.

12mo., Cloth, \$1.25.

While the name of Ella Wheeler Wilcox is known mainly through her popular poetical works, there is a constantly increasing interest manifested in her prose essays which cover a field entirely her own.

Mrs. Wilcox possesses a talent for safely handling dangerous and hitherto tabooed subjects. Her pen is like a skilled surgeon's knife, with which she lays bare human emotions and passions, and in epigrams of warning, sympathy and counsel, she crystallizes her discoveries for the benefit of humanity.

However daring and unusual the topics she discourses, no one can read any chapter in this book without feeling stronger to resist temptation and braver to cope with life's battles. Every phase of emotion is analyzed, every relation of man to woman treated, every folly and frailty probed; the lancet is often sharp, but there is balm and healing on its point.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox's Poems.

Poems of Passion, 60th Edition, 12mo., Cloth,	- - - -	\$1.00
Poems of Pleasure, 25th Edition, 12mo., Cloth,	- - - -	1.00
Maurine and Other Poems, 30th Edition, 12mo., Cloth,	- - - -	1.00
Three Volumes, 12mo., Cloth, in neat box,	- - - -	3.00
Three Volumes, 12mo., White Vellum, in neat box,	- - - -	4.50
Three Volumes, 12mo. Half Calf, in neat box,	- - - -	7.50

"The foremost baby's book of the world."—*New Orleans Picayune.*

THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF NOD

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Poems, Songs, Stories and Allegories Beautifully Printed and Bound

With over Sixty Original Illustrations by Louise M. Mears

Square Quarto, Cloth, Gold and Ink Design, \$1.50

**MORRILL, HIGGINS & CO., Publishers,
CHICAGO.**



"KILL ME, FIRE!" CRIED LAKHMI. P. 102.

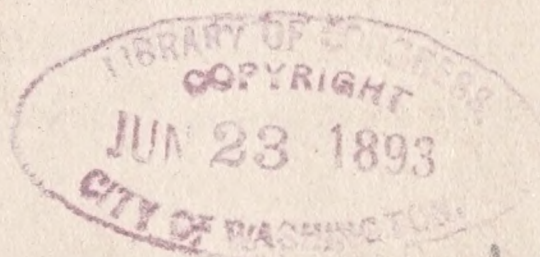
THE CHATEAU DE LA RAGE

(THE CHATEAU OF THE MAD DOG)

TRANSLATED BY

H. O. COOKE

40
I dybilit
series



245114

CHICAGO
MORRILL, HIGGINS & CO.

(1893)

PZ³
S7943C

Copyright 1898
MORRILL, HIGGINS & Co.

W. B. CONKEY COMPANY, PRINTERS AND BINDERS.

CONTENTS.

PART I.—PROLOGUE.

THE MYSTERIOUS CHATEAU.....	7
-----------------------------	---

PART I.

THE JAGUAR HUNT.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE ALVIELLA FAMILY.....	43
II. THE BEAUTIFUL LAKHMI.....	51
III. DOMINIQUE.....	58
IV. THE OATH.....	67
V. THE JEALOUS MASTER.....	77
VI. THE TAYA.....	86
VII. THE HUMAN FEAST.....	98

PART II.

A HUSBAND'S VENGEANCE.

I. A DAUGHTER TO MARRY.....	103
II. A FORTUNE HUNTER.....	112
III. THE QUARREL.....	120
IV. THE INSULT.....	136
V. THE MARQUIS' SECRET.....	147
VI. A SINGULAR BARGAIN.....	153
VII. THE SPY.....	169

PAGE		CHAPTER
VIII.	THE DUAL.....	181
IX.	THE HOUSE AT NEUILLY.....	195
X.	LOVE FEVER.....	209
XI.	CLOTILDE'S TEST.....	230
XII.	THE DEPARTURE.....	240
XIII.	WHERE DUROUGET BECOMES IMPENE- TRABLE.....	252
XIV.	SOME INDISPENSABLE EXPLANATIONS...	259
XV.	THE PURSUIT.....	269
XVI.	A SLAP IN THE FACE.....	282
XVII.	TWO TURTLE DOVES.....	293
XVIII.	A REPRESENTATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR	305
XIX.	THE THIRD ACCOMPLICE.....	314
XX.	THE ANONYMOUS LETTERS.....	326
XXI.	HYPNOTISM.....	342
XXII.	DEMONIO.	352
XXIII.	AFTER THE VENGEANCE.....	391
XXIV.	LIVING TO KILL.....	378
XXV.	CONCLUSION.....	388

THE CHATEAU DE LA RAGE

PROLOGUE.

THE MYSTERIOUS CHATEAU.

Within a stone's throw of La Frilliere, almost on the highest point of a verdant hill in Touraine, well named the garden of France, stands, near the Amboise road, a small chateau which had for many years all its gates and doors carefully barred against intruders.

Far from having any resemblance to the legendary manor of which the aspect alone conveys the idea of mystery and gloom, this chateau, though bearing every evidence of neglect and decay, still maintained its native and inviting beauty, very attractive to the eyes of the traveler.

What impressed strangers most, was the elevated position of this lonely dwelling, but if, instead of keeping to the high road, they had followed the winding avenue leading up to this mysterious habi-

tation, and on arriving at the old rusty gate had gazed curiously within, a very cursory glance would have enabled the observer to decide that no human being had passed the threshold for some considerable time.

In 187— at the season when all the world is journeying towards watering places or the seaside, I followed the general example, and chance conducting me to the avenue leading to the little old chateau. I bravely ascended it, for the temperature rendered the effort rather painful, and in a few minutes found myself at the top.

A secret presentiment told me that I was on the threshold of a mystery. It was the month of August and the day was oppressively warm, but completely sheltered by the trees lining the avenue, I luxuriated in the freshness of their shade, while pursuing my investigations.

My surprise increased at every step. A thousand wild ideas crossed my brain. Trying to take a practical view of things, my first thought was to return to La Frilliere in order to question one of the inhabitants, but the situation of the chateau led me to believe that the extremity of the park, opposite to the spot where I now stood, ought to border the high road.

I therefore decided to continue my fatiguing ascent, and in about twenty minutes time found that I had not been mistaken and that I was only a few steps from the road leading to Vouvray, whose small white houses I could plainly distinguish through the foliage. There I stopped, for two reasons; the first, the most imperative, to recover breath; the second, the most attractive, to examine a worm-eaten door which I had just discovered. I advanced toward it.

The lock, red with rust, possessed a very respectable bolt, strongly wedged into the stone. I instinctively leaned against this stone with my full weight. One of the screws became loosened under my pressure, dropped out, and rolled on the ground at my feet. Without pausing to reflect, I took my knife and by its aid soon found means for the others to follow the example of the first. The lock itself fell with the last screw. I hesitated a moment, then, curiosity getting the better of my scruples, and strong in the knowledge that I was there simply as a discoverer, I pushed the door with my full strength. It slowly yielded. The rust on its hinges and the long grass inside prevented it opening easily, but I redoubled my efforts, resolved to persevere in my investigations to the end.

A great disappointment met me on my entrance. I had counted on being able to gain a complete view of the castle at a glance, and instead, found myself in a narrow pathway bordered by thickly planted trees, which limited my view to a few yards. I pushed my way through a dense thicket as quickly as the interlacing branches permitted. An English garden, which must at one time have been very beautiful was soon disclosed to view, but which, like the grounds I had just forced my way through, lay completely neglected. No trace of path or turf was visible. A thick growth of weeds covered the entire space, and at the far end could be discerned the turrets of the chateau.

I carefully examined the surroundings; no traces of steps could be discovered, no index that any human being had penetrated to this place for many years. A group of weeping willows attracted my attention. I directed my steps towards it; the ground was damper here than where I had been exploring. An adder glided from under the moss at my approach. Sinister omen.

I put aside the hanging branches and beheld a large square tomb-stone. I advanced and read, deeply engraved in the center, these two words:

Clotilde—Sanchez.

Underneath was a death's head.

Not a date, not one word of adieu or of regret was on this tomb, not even the three sacramental letters R. J. P., which generally adorn the most humble of crosses.

Who then had been buried there? Who reposed in this gloomy grave on which the sun was never to shine? Who were these two, lying together there, for whom no better sepulchre had been found than a corner of this enclosed park, where even nature seemed to redouble her efforts to bury for ever their very memory under its bright adornment, like the cyprus on the tomb of Willis.

Neither Clotilde nor Sanchez were ordinary names. There was an aristocratic flavor in these two names which added to the interest they had already awakened within me.

I had discovered the retreat of the sphynx, and could place my finger on the enigma without finding the word, with my eyes fixed on the fifteen letters composing the two names—Clotilde, Sanchez—I invoked each of them as if they could arise and answer me.

At last I made an effort and in the hope that the interior of the chateau might lead to some further information, I turned my steps in its direction.

Feeling for the steps leading to the entrance under the thick carpet of moss, leaves, and branches which covered them, I at last succeeded in arriving at the door.

All was still within.

I left this door as I had left the principal entrance on the avenue, and going to the side of the house, came to the windows on the ground floor through which I could have examined at ease the interior of the room, if the windows had not been furnished with solid shutters covered, in their turn, by a heavy growth of ivy.

Removing the smaller branches of the gigantic parasite, I examined the shutters carefully, the existence of which greatly added to my curiosity, and I was not long in discovering one carelessly closed, and only held in its place by a thin branch of a tree leaning against it.

I removed this obstacle, opened the shutter and admitted the daylight into the interior. I saw across the dust-stained panes, a room furnished with sombre colored hangings. This was all I could distinguish at first, but I had gone too far to stop. Dipping my handkerchief in a small pool of water which the hot August sun had not altogether dried up, I rubbed it against the window and could

not resist a cry of dismay, for the glass, around which the putty, rendered dry and useless by the wear of time, gave way under my pressure and fell on the floor in a thousand pieces. To pass my hand through the opening, turn the fastener, which yielded more readily than I expected, to open the window and jump into the room, was the work of an instant.

I found myself in a bedroom; everything was in perfect order; on the walls hung weapons and some pictures, a soft thick carpet covered the floor, the whole surroundings conveying the impression of a rigid severity keeping in check a spirit of luxury and good taste.

Such was the first impression conveyed to my mind. Evidently this had been a man's room, a few books still adorned an *étagère*.

Suddenly I felt a slight breeze pass across my face.

It was a soft fresh current of air, a perfumed kiss from the breeze without.

Looking around to see where this breeze came from, I remarked a closed window in which one of the panes had been broken.

The hole made in the glass must have been caused by a blow from some hard substance, and

the blow could not have been given from the outside, as some of the glass still laid on the carpet.

To one of the sharp points of the jagged breakage hung a small piece of skin, which having removed I examined with great care. It was the finger of a glove once white, but now blackened by time, upon which were embroidered some small cabalistic signs in black and red.

The finger of the glove was small, and must at one time have fitted a woman's hand.

Decidedly, everything was very strange in this deserted place.

Continuing my researches, I perceived a candlestick on a small buhl table. This was a valuable discovery for me.

Determined to search the chateau thoroughly and not being desirous of continuing my struggles with the closed shutters, I drew from my pocket the box of wax matches which I always carried with me, and soon succeeded in lighting the candle.

Holding the light up, I advanced towards an alcove in which was stationed a four post bed; in the curtain I discovered a place where a rent had been made.

This was between the two posts of the bed, a little higher than the head.

I held the light nearer and was horrified to discover that the tear had been made by a bullet fired from below and glancing upwards, consequently, it must have come from a weapon held by someone lying on the bed.

The ball had lodged itself deeply in the stone, but by scraping with my knife and enlarging the cavity, I succeeded in removing it. The bullet was stained with blood; it must have then passed through some human body before lodging there, and considering the position of the projectile with regard to the bed, this part of the human body must have been the head.

In fact, on a closer examination I found on the roughened edges of the hole made by the ball, some short black hair, then guiding the light all around the spot I remarked several stains on the wall with which the curtains also were smeared.

These sinister details left no doubt on my mind. Some man had blown out his brains on this bed.

I had seen enough. I opened a door which led into a spacious hall, conducting me to a large room luxuriously furnished and which I concluded must be the salon of the chateau.

The principal piece of furniture in this room was an Erard grand piano in a case of carved ebony.

I opened it; but not for the world would I have touched the keys. Yet there was nothing strange about the instrument, but it seemed to me that at the slightest touch it would give forth a sound of grief, a lamentable cry of a disastrous past. I respected the silence which surrounded it.

I went back to the hall and began to ascend the staircase.

At the second floor the candle was no longer of any use to me. Several attics, evidently intended for the use of servants, opened off this landing. From these rose the turrets. The first was only a store-room for fruits, without furniture or ornament of any kind. The second consisted of a very small bedroom, with a work-room adjoining it.

This part, separated from the main portion of the dwelling, offered a great contrast to the other parts of the chateau. The bedstead was of iron and almost shabby in its simplicity. An array of hunting weapons occupied the mantel-shelf; in the place generally occupied by the mirror, numerous pipes were hung up separately, or ranged in racks fastened to the wall, revealed the manly and rustic taste of the last occupant of the room. Some hunting sketches from the timid hare to the fierce tiger of the jungles completed the decorations.

I did not waste much time in this turret; this was not what I was looking for. What I was burning to discover was the bed-chamber of Clotilde, her private sanctuary.

I came upon it on the first landing, a door, which I had failed to notice on coming up stairs, led to it.

What a difference between it and the one I had just gained entrance to! It was as gay and bright as the other was sombre and gloomy. The hangings were of light silk of an eastern design, harmonizing exquisitely with the rest of the furniture, and each detail revealed the woman of fashion, beautiful and refined, as the corolla of a flower betrays its perfume.

The bed and its surroundings represented the tragic side.

No trace of suicide existed here, however, but simply that of death; a white sheet completely covering the bed.

The bolster without pillows, occupied the upper part. At the foot a yellow wax candle had burnt out in the large brass candlestick holding it.

The furniture had been removed to the other part of the room, leaving a large space free around the bed.

I picked up a hammer and some nails which had been left forgotten on the carpet. They were heavy, and such as are used for nailing up coffins.

I left the room hastily, a prey to an emotion which may be easily conceived.

It was time to take my departure.

I closed the shutter I had opened, and crossing the park, soon found myself at the little worm-eaten door, though not without throwing a last backward glance at the tumulous stone with its inscription rendered all the more eloquent by its laconism.

I replaced the lock as well as I could and went on my way.

A few moments later and I was walking on the road to Vouvray.

A little boy of ten or twelve years of age, was playing at a farm door.

Faithful to the promise I had made myself to question the first person I met after leaving the chateau I called to the child. He raised his clear bright eyes to mine and came up quickly.

"What is it, Sir," he asked.

"You belong to this neighborhood?"

"Yes, Sir, I have never left it."

"Whose chateau is that?" I demanded, pointing

upwards to the spot from which I had just descended.

At this question the boy's cheeks paled.

"That chateau?" he repeated, designating in his turn the topmost ridge of the mountain.

"Yes, do you know anything about it?"

"Yes, Sir, I do."

"Very well, then, speak."

The boy came close up to me and lowering his voice, whispered:

"It is the house of the Mad Dog!" said he.

This name startled me. I had never listened to a more sinister denomination.

"What did you say?" I asked, thinking I could not have heard aright.

"The house of the Mad Dog," he repeated.

"I understand now."

"And do you know how the place got this name?" I pursued after a short silence.

"No."

"To whom does it belong?"

"I do not know. All I do know is that it has been shut up for a long time past, and that no one would dare to go there."

"Do they believe that the place is haunted, then? Has any one seen the ghost?"

"No but just as good as if they did, for at midnight you can hear howls coming from the chateau."

"The ghost?"

"Yes, the ghost, the mad dog. Gomez's dog."

"Is that the name of the ghost?"

"Yes sir."

I had heard enough.

PART II.

THE KEY, THE LETTER AND THE HAND.

My friend Dupuys, with whom I was passing a few days, a most agreeable companion, a good sportsman and a successful lawyer, occupied a bright pleasant house on the road to Ambroise, behind which stretched a large garden, the lawn serving as an admirable playground for his two sons, Auguste and Edward.

When I arrived at the lower hall, which served both as dining and ante-room, and was exclusively reserved for the better class of my friend's clients, all the family were already seated at table; I was welcomed with a shout gayly addressed to me by Dupuys and the others.

"Late as usual, dawdler," said the former.

"You must excuse us," said his wife with a gracious smile. "My husband would not allow us to wait any longer than a quarter of an hour and dinner had to be served."

"He was quite right and you also, madame," I

replied. "I am going to take this place between Edward and his brother. I promise to make up for lost time, for I am simply starving."

"Where have you been?" asked Dupuys.

"Ah! that is a long story! I must tell you all about it."

"I began to think you had lost your way."

"No, but I am fond of exploring. Ah! so you have ghosts in this part of the country?"

"I know now what you have got to tell me. You have been to Vouvray?"

"Exactly."

"And they told you about Gomez's dog?"

"Yes, but that was not all. I saw the chateau!"

"That is not a difficult matter, perched up on that height it is hardly possible not to see it."

"I am not alluding to the exterior."

"What do you mean?"

"Why the interior of course!" — watching for the effect which I intended to produce.

It was even greater than I expected.

"The interior?" exclaimed Dupuys, "you have seen the interior of the *Chateau de la Rage*? what induced you to do such a thing?"

I then favored him with a detailed account of my excursion. From time to time Dupuys interrupted me with such exclamations as;

"Just so! Yes, it must be so.

"You are acquainted with the place?" I asked.

"Yes", he replied.

"Very well, it is your turn now. I have described the place, now you can relate the scenes which took place there."

"You are fortunate in preferring your request to-day, for yesterday I could not have satisfied your very natural curiosity."

"What was the objection?"

"I was bound by an oath, but to-day I am free, look, read."

And he held a black-edged letter out to me.

I opened it and read:

"You are requested to attend the funeral rites of Fernande Isabella Marie de Burgos, Marchioness de Alviella, who died at her residence, rue de l'Université. The funeral will take place at twelve o'clock precisely at the church of St. Thomas d'Aquin.

"From M. Foucault, notary and executor of the deceased."

"What a singular way of announcing a death," I said, after reading it.

"Is it not?"

"But," I added, "what connection is there

between this announcement and the Chateau de la Rage?"

"It belonged to the Marchioness d'Alviella."

"But her name is not Clotilde," I observed, laying my finger on the Christian names enumerated in the letter.

"It was her daughter-in-law who bore that name."

"And Sanchez?"

"Was Clotilde's husband."

"Then he was the son of the marchioness?"

"Precisely."

As he said this, Dupuys got up, opened a drawer, and returned with three objects which he laid on the table; a key, a letter and something more voluminous wrapped up in an old paper for which I held out my hand.

"Presently," said my host, stopping me. "Let us proceed in order. In the first place, look at this, it is the key of the chateau."

"How did it come into your hands?"

"I sold the property to Madame d'Alviella thirteen years ago, but wait, read this, before I say anything more."

He took a letter from the table and handed it to me. It was addressed to Dupuys and signed by

Monsieur Foucault, the executor of the Marchioness, who had written to his brother lawyer as follows:

My dear Dupuys:—

“It is now almost ten years since the Marchioness d’Alviella, my honored client, placed in your hands the key of the gate of the property, sold by you to her three years before through my agency, at the same time begging you to await her orders either to demolish or wall in the chateau.

“On leaving Touraine, where the melancholy event which you know of demanded her presence, the marchioness had resolved to have the chateau pulled down and to construct in its place a simple Mausoleum, which hidden among the trees of the hill, would help to bury in oblivion the scene of the tragedy, while still consecrating the memory of the unhappy victims. This project was worthy both of a mother and a christian.

“Madame hoped that time would mitigate her sorrow and give her strength to accomplish her object and you would have been entrusted to see that her directions were attended to, but instead of abating, the settled grief of the marchioness seemed to become more poignant from day to day.

“Now that the doctors have given up all hope,

and my client feels that her end is near, she has revealed the horrible history of what occurred in Touraine. I need not tell you that this revelation was made to me under the seal of secrecy.

"Fearing to revive people's memory, the marchioness has modified her first plans and has begged me to write requesting you to see the following directions put into execution, but only after her death.

"Then as soon as you are made acquainted with the death of the Marchioness d'Alviella, you will have the chateau completely walled in.

"Not doubting but that you will agree to accept this charge, I send you, in the name of the marchioness the sum of eighteen thousand francs, which you will dispose of in carrying out her instructions, retaining the balance for payment of your own services.

"Accept, my dear Dupuys, etc."

"Why have you not put Madame d'Alviella's orders into execution?" I asked Dupuys, when I had finished the perusal of the letter.

"Because," he replied, "although it is more than six months since I received the letter the Marchioness died only three days ago."

"Of course; I had forgotten the other letter."

"Tomorrow I shall give the necessary orders," resumed Dupuys, "You can boast of being the only one who has ever visited the chateau since the marchioness came here accompanied by Gomez, and shut it up with her own hands and left me the key."

"But how, having possession of this key, were you never tempted to visit the chateau?"

"The Marchioness, when she handed it to me, made me promise not to do so. And now, you can open this parcel," added Dupuys, pointing to the third object which he had left on the table.

I did not wait to be told a second time. Judge of my surprise when on removing the wrapper, I saw that it contained a wooden hand with a white glove, a woman's hand, evidently, for a gold bracelet still encircled the wrist, and the glove was stamped with the same cabalistic signs which I had noticed on the torn finger I had found in Sanchez's room.

This hand was most artistically made and moulded after nature.

"What is the meaning of this"? I asked of Dupuys.

"A terrible souvenir."

"Well?"

“Ah! my dear fellow, this lamentable story is as strange as it is pitiful. Listen, and I will tell you the whole story, as far as I know.”

And Dupuys told me as follows.

PART III.

THE TWO TRAVELERS.

About ten years ago, eight days before the visit of Madame d'Alvilla, a carriage stopped at the door of this house one night in autumn.

Awakened by the sound of the bells on the harness of the horses, I opened the window of my room and saw a man descend from the carriage, who, on perceiving me, called out,

"Whoever you may be I implore you to open!"

"Who are you?" I asked him.

"That is of no consequence, we will pay handsomely for your hospitality, open! a woman's life is at stake! in the name of Heaven open quickly!"

These last words decided me.

"Ah! thank you," said the stranger, "let me beg of you to hasten."

My wife had already risen and was dressing quickly, for she could not deny herself the pleasure of rendering service to one in need, and a few moments afterward, aided by the driver, we

placed on a mattress which we quickly arranged for her in this very room, a young woman seriously wounded, if one could judge from the quantity of blood which flowed from her side.

Her costume was singular, being composed of a long black velvet dress, with a border of different colored silks, all studded with cabalistic signs embroidered in gold.

Now that the wounded stranger was installed, I had time to examine the people whom I had just received. The young woman was marvelously beautiful. She had not fainted and seemed to bear her sufferings with great courage, for a strange smile lingered on her lips. The man, who appeared to be about thirty or thirty-five years of age, had regular features, a refined voice and a look of unmistakable distinction.

"How do you feel?" he asked his companion.

"I am thirsty. Can I have something to drink?"

I poured a little cordial which my wife had brought down in a glass and gave it to her.

The poor sufferer drank greedily.

"Are you better?" demanded her companion.

"I feel almost well now."

"Yet you speak with an effort. Raise your head and I will arrange another pillow for you. The blood might choke you."

"No, not the blood, but joy!"

This strange answer upset all my conjectures. For some minutes I had been trying to decide what kind of conduct I ought to adopt. Evidently a crime had been committed. The care lavished on the victim by her companion banished all suspicions regarding him from my mind. I frankly asked the question.

"Who gave you this frightful wound, madame?"

She looked at me for some seconds without replying and then in a steady voice replied,

"Myself."

Then, as if in denial of this strange affirmation, she added,

"Send for a doctor. . . . I do not want to die yet."

I gave the driver directions to go for Doctor Caron, and he set off at full speed.

"Is the doctor you have sent for clever?" demanded the wounded woman.

"Very clever, madame."

"If he can help to keep me alive three months longer, I will pay him as much a minute as he would gain in a year."

This phrase proved to me that she must be the possessor of an immense fortune. Another thing

surprised me. I could not define the connection existing between the two travelers. The man did not treat the sufferer either as sister, lover or friend. His appearance proved to me that he was at least, her equal. He took a lively interest in all that was happening. I even saw traces of emotion on his features, which he could not altogether disguise; but this emotion did not seem to proceed from actual affection. While my wife was assisting the stranger to partake of a second drink, he drew me aside.

"One word, if you please? Tell me, sir, is there a lawyer in this place?"

"I am one."

"What! You are? . . . A lawyer. I will require your services to-night."

"My time is at your disposal."

"We will speak, then, later on. Allow me, in the meantime, to ask you one question, and promise that you will answer me frankly."

"I promise."

"Were you not thinking of informing the authorities of what is taking place here?"

"I was thinking of it, I confess, for I place no faith in this pretended attempt at suicide."

"Well! I implore you in the name of my com-

panion, to do nothing. I will be frank with you. She did not wound herself, but her would-be murderer only did an act of justice. I give you my word of honor. Any enquiry would only detain us in this neighborhood. You can remain silent without compromising yourself in any way."

I reflected a few minutes, the stranger's air of sincerity decided me. "Well?" he said, "if the doctor consents to remain silent, so will I. We will reward your silence handsomely, not that it is of such very great importance to us, but because different conduct on your part would detain us here, and my companion is anxious to sail from Marseilles in eight days."

"In her present condition?"

"It is her wish, and she is accustomed to having her wishes carried into effect."

"I promise you again, that if Monsieur Caron, the doctor, consents to remain silent, I shall do so likewise, but I do not want any reward."

"Not for yourself; perhaps but will you refuse it for your poor—"

"Yes, for should I accept it, I would have to disclose everything, and I have just promised silence."

"You are a good, kind-hearted man, and I will

adopt some means of avoiding your scruples."

At this moment the wounded woman called to him.

"Monsieur George," she said, "help madame to turn me round a little, this position fatigues me."

I went with him to aid in granting this request, and could not refrain from uttering a cry of horror.

"Ah! good God! your arm is broken!"

For the woman's right arm was completely bent back from the elbow in a position which could only have resulted from a serious fracture.

But my exclamation had no effect on the strangers.

"That is nothing," said George.

"Take a knife and cut off all these fastenings," said the young woman quietly.

George obeyed and after having slit up the velvet sleeve, cut the ligatures which fastened it to the shoulder blade and ended by entirely removing the false forearm, which he laid on the table saying:

"It is broken."

"It must have happened when I fell," replied the other simply.

I looked at this marvel of surgical art, so skillfully made that neither I nor my wife had remarked

that the stranger was maimed, and astonishment succeeded admiration on seeing that the false hand was covered with a white glove covered with cabalistic signs. One of the fingers of the glove was torn and showed the wood underneath. That hand, my dear fellow is the one you are now holding in yours.

"And here is the finger in question," I interrupted, holding up to Dupuys the piece of a glove I had found in Sanchez's room, and which I had forgotten to mention when describing my excursion.

"Where did you discover that?" he asked me.

"At the chateau. The stranger must have been a sorceress," I said to Dupuys, "or at least she wished to appear as one."

"Not at all, but let me continue:"

"I was examining," continued the lawyer, "with as much attention as you did a moment ago, this singular glove, when the doctor arrived. He entered the room with the air of a man who understood his business and knew the value of time, and immediately proceeded to examine his new patient's wound.

Our complete silence questioned him.

"It is serious," he muttered after a few moments.

"Tell me all you dread, doctor," said the wound-

ed woman, "I am not afraid, so you may speak plainly to me."

Caron's simplicity is only to be equaled by his skill. Instead of veiling his answer in abstruse technicalities which would have conveyed nothing to the sufferer he said: "I cannot bind myself, madame, to effect a cure, and I would be compelled to regard it as a miracle if such a thing happened."

"I understand doctor, my wound is mortal," she answered calmly.

"Madame," replied Caron, hesitating in spite of this unnatural stoicism.

"Answer if you please."

"Well then, yes!"

"So much the better, I wish to die. I have nothing more to do here."

Her companion seemed to understand. My wife, Caron and I exchanged looks of astonishment.

"What I wish to know is this, doctor," continued the wounded woman, "how much time can you give me to live? Can you tell me?"

"I can at least say what is probable."

"And what time do you assign for my death?"

"Three months." The woman's face brightened, a smile broke on her pale lips and her eyes flashed.

"I shall be able to die over there, then," she said.

"Thank you, doctor."

While answering these questions Caron was busily occupied in binding up the wound.

"Could we leave in an hour, doctor?"

"Are you really thinking of such a thing? It is impossible, madame."

"I must do so, nevertheless,"

"Yes, it has to be done, repeated George.

"But a long rest might save you?"

"I will go."

"Could you not arrange some means of support for madame by which she would be enabled to continue her journey?"

"I can."

"Then by all means do so," eagerly interrupted the sufferer.

Caron began the operation. When the bandages were arranged he plastered them over with starch and standing up, said: "In two hours you can start, madame."

George led him to the far end of the room.

"It is quite understood, sir, since Monsieur Dupuys sees no objection, that this matter is to be kept private."

"I am satisfied to adopt the same line of conduct

as Monsieur Dupuys," said to the doctor gravely.

The stranger then drew from his pocket book five notes of a hundred francs each, and slipped them into Caron's hand.

"Five hundred francs!" exclaimed the latter, "but this is too much."

"It is only just that the wealthy should acknowledge your care in an exceptional manner, doctor," said George, "since you give them to the poor, and madame has a fortune of twenty millions."

"Accept it, accept it, doctor," interrupted the wounded woman, "and excuse me for offering so little."

Caron was vanquished; he put the notes in his pocket, bowed to his patient, and after shaking hands with me, left the house, accompanied by George.

"Make use of our carriage to drive back, doctor."

"Thank you, I will do so gladly, for you cannot leave for a couple of hours yet." They parted, Caron got in to the post-chaise which conveyed him rapidly in the direction of Ambroise,.

"Monsieur Dupuys," then called out George from the outside.

I left the room, leaving the wounded woman with my wife.

"Oblige me by preparing a deed of gift for three millions."

This enormous sum did not astonish me; the strange conduct of my guests had hardened me against any surprises.

"Under what names?" I asked.

"I will give them to you. Let us go into your private office."

When we were installed there.

"The name of the donor first," I asked him.

"Madame Baxio."

"Is her husband alive?"

"No she is a widow."

"And the names of the receivers?"

"Armond-Paul-George de Maurange."

"Profession?"

"Gentleman."

"The deed will be ready within an hour, but first give me the christian name of the donor."

"It is useless."

"Pardon me, the heirs of this lady could—"

"She has no heirs; do not lose a moment I beg of you."

And my new client hastily left the office. When I had finished the deed and returned to the room, George de Maurange and Madame Baxio were

alone. On entering I heard Madame Baxio say to him: "If I could only get as far as Marseilles, Shiba would save my life."

She stopped when she saw me, and pointing to the deed which I held in my hand:

"Give it to me Monsieur," she said.

George gave her a pen. She signed with her left hand, without even allowing me to read the deed aloud to her as I wished to do. Monsieur de Maurange put the document in his pocket-book, from which he had drawn the five hundred francs for the doctor, and taking out a still more voluminous roll than the first, he offered it to me, saying:

"This is your fee, monsieur."

I had advised Caron to accept, so I could only follow his example.

When my guests had departed I found myself richer by twenty-five thousand francs.

"A good night's work for you, my dear Dupuys," I said.

"Yes but this was not all."

"Ah!"

"When the carriage returned from taking the doctor home, we had some difficulty in settling the wounded woman comfortably. When she was at last seated George took his place by her side, and

the carriage started off at a headlong pace. It was then three o'clock in the morning. Everything had passed so quickly that I could almost have doubted the reality of the events which had taken place under my roof, if several very tangible proofs had not existed to force the knowledge of the truth on me.

"The twenty-five thousand francs in the first place!"

"And the artificial gloved hand!"

"Have you ever heard anything of the travelers since?"

"Nothing particular, until about six month's ago."

"Your story has interested me greatly, but what connection was there between these two travelers and the chateau, or rather to Clotilde and Sanchez?"

"Impatient fellow; give me time to finish. Since receiving Monsieur Foucault's letter which you read a short time ago, I have seen him and he gave me an account with all details of the horrible tragedy enacted on the marchioness' property. He made me swear not to confide the story to any one so long as Madame d'Alviella lived. Even yesterday, ignorant as I was of her decease, I could

not have told you anything, but to-day, I am at liberty to speak. Listen attentively to this story. I know of none more heart rending, for it has for its principal causes, the two most frightful passions in the human heart: hate and jealousy. Listen, only never write of what I am going to tell you."

"Then hold your tongue," I replied laughing; "your request is illogical. Tell a novelist not to write above all a thrilling tragedy, is to ask an impossibility."

I will be silent then, unless you promise me, if you should feel inclined to tell this story again, to change the names of the personages and places."

"Oh! as to that I promise you faithfully!"

"Very well! Give me your undivided attention, and if the reader finds this story wanting in interest, it is because you have not told it skillfully, for it is full of terrible incidents and dramatic scenes."

The story of the Chateau de la Rage lasted three evenings.

I have taken three months to write it. My hope is, that it may interest you for three hours!"

END OF PROLOGUE.

THE CHATEAU DE LA RAGE.

PART I.

THE JAGUAR HUNT.

CHAPTER I.

THE ALVIELLA FAMILY.

A few years after the accession of Don Pedro to the throne of Brazil, the Marquis Alphonse d'Alviella left Lisbon with his wife, Marie, and son Sanchez, still a child, in order to personally superintend the vast properties he possessed near Fernambonne, a town of three divisions; Rêcife, the Isle of Saint Antonio, and Boa Vista.

Nothing particular attended his arrival in Brazil. The earlier years of his return passed without incident. Sanchez attained his fifteenth year. The boy had readily become acclimatised to the hot country where winter is unknown.

As soon as he touched this fiery soil, the Brazilian blood flowing in Sanchez's veins circulated more freely, as if in recognition of his native land.

He breathed free in this torrid zone, feeling as if he had always lived there. Indulged by his parents, who adored him, while he was still a youth he was soon more the master than his father of the little empire formed by the habitations of the Aviella family with its extensive plantations of sugar, cotton and tobacco.

Sanchez led an active life. As soon as the temperature permitted it, he mounted his mare, Gazella, and started, his cigar between his lips, to overlook, as an amateur, the work of the slaves.

The young man adopted this mode of life, which was thoroughly approved of by the marquis, more from a desire to make his power felt, than from any wish to be of use; nevertheless, the foundation of his character was not bad, and the blacks, without actually feeling any affection for him, regarded him with liking and respect.

The appearance of the young marquis counted for a good deal. Beauty possesses its own eloquence, and Sanchez was calculated to awaken admiration, as, with his gun slung across his shoulder, his face shaded by the broad brim of his large straw hat, he set off on his daily rounds, urging Gazella both by word and gesture.

This careless activity, the supremacy he exerted

over all, as much on the plantation as in the house, where his most trifling wishes were considered as laws, simply satisfied the desires of his heart, yet untouched by passion, but which only waited a look to break out like a volcano.

There are some hearts whose apparent calm is as a fire beneath ashes. Sanchez was of this number.

The Marquis d'Alviella, his father, only interfered in cases of grave importance, leaving to his son and the steward the full control of the work on the various plantations. The steward's name was Gomez. He was a Brazilian like his master but had never left the country. Trustworthy and of great activity, he had succeeded to his father, who had filled the same position for Sanchez's grandfather.

Gomez had but one passion; hunting.

And the greater number of my readers, who tremble with excitement at the sight of a timid hare, can readily comprehend the intense ardor of this Nimrod's emotion, for he had to do with formidable game. Gomez hunted the jaguar.

At night he would lay in wait, concealed by the large leaves of the palm tree, or lying on the slope of some deep ravine, waiting patiently for the

ferocious animal to spring on the tempting bait fastened securely to a tree.

Then taking steady aim he would kill the beast with unerring skill, and carry home his bleeding spoil in triumph.

The rainy season was the most favorable for his exploits.

Chased away then from the mountains the wild animals left their inundated dens, descending towards the ocean to prowl round the towns situated on the coast.

At this time of the year, either in the neighborhood of Récife or the isle of San Antonio, Gomez passed all his nights never returning without booty.

Sometimes he would make his appearance bending under a double weight. In such cases, Gomez was in a most amiable temper and every one on the plantation knew that he was satisfied with his night's work. Like other disciples of Saint Hubert, the steward could not resist the desire to boast of his exploits. Sanchez naturally became his most chosen confidante. It is easy to guess the results. Fascinated by Gomez's recitals, the young marquis wanted to go jaguar hunting with him.

One morning after Gomez had just concluded one of his most thrilling recitals:

"My good Gomez," said the young man, "an idea has just occurred to me."

"What is it, sir?"

"Do you not find going out to hunt alone all night, without anyone to witness your skill, and share your pleasure, rather lonely work?"

"I certainly do, it is not very amusing," replied Gomez, falling readily into the trap.

"Well then, console yourself. Henceforth you will never have to go alone."

"How can that be, sir?"

"I will go with you."

"How can you think of such a thing?"

"I have thought of nothing else for the last eight days. I also wish to hunt jaguars."

Gomez hesitated a few moments.

"No, no," he replied, "it is impossible."

"And why? Have I not a good gun? And besides, if it is not good enough, could you not lend me one of yours?"

"I was not thinking about the gun! I cannot, I ought not to expose you to any danger."

"Nonsense! Has anything ever happened to you?"

"That is true; but if any misfortune should happen to me, sir, your father could easily find another

steward to fill my place, and that would be all while you it makes me shudder even to think of it."

"Well! but am I not a man? I am eighteen years old and besides, I am sure nothing would happen to me."

"Nothing would induce me to consent without first consulting your father."

"You make a nice business of it; you will cause him useless annoyance and yet not prevent me from accomplishing my project."

"How?"

"If you do not let me go with you, I shall go alone."

This was unanswerable.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said the steward in an anxious voice, "I intend hunting to-night, will you do me the honor of accompanying me?"

"Ah! dear old Gomez!" cried Sanchez throwing an arm affectionately round his shoulders, "Good Heavens! You old rascal, how difficult it is to have my own way with you!"

"Then we are agreed for this evening?"

"This evening?"

Sanchez went away radiant.

The first shot of the new hunter was a masterly one.

The moon shone on the damp jungles. The bait was fastened securely, and a low growling echoing through the mountains soon announced the approach of the jaguar.

"There he is, there he is, Gomez!"

"Silence, sir, and don't stir for your life!"

They were lying in wait behind a fragment of rock at some distance from the kid which had been prepared as a feast to attract the monster. The dark supple form of the jaguar was plainly outlined against the silvery sky.

"Are you ready, sir?"

"Yes."

The kid gave a cry of terror. With one bound the dark figure cleared the space which separated them and sprung on the poor animal with a savage growl.

"Fire!" said Gomez.

Sanchez obeyed. The steward was preparing to shoot in his turn, when the two shadows parted asunder; the white (the kids',) sunk helplessly down, and the jaguar lay stretched on the ground as if killed by a thunderbolt.

"Bravo! Monsieur le Marquis!" cried Gomez.

This exploit completely gained the young man's cause and Gomez could no longer refuse to allow

his young master to accompany him. Hunting became the chief occupation of the young marquis.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEAUTIFUL LAKHMI.

We have already said that Sanchez's heart needed only a glance to yield itself up to passion. One day this beat as it had never done before. Love had entered into it, and what love. Ah! there was nothing of the gentle flame, which at its rise, burns for the first time, discreetly and perfumed as a vestal flame. No, this was an imperious desire, a man's real passion, which burned in this youth's heart. She who had produced this revolution in the young marquis' heart, was one of his father's slaves. Her name was Lakhmi, the title given by the Indians at Bongalose to the statue of beauty. Her mother had been sold to the captain of a slave ship in Calcutta, who devoted his leisure moments to smuggling opium. He was Lakhmi's father; only the captain was ignorant of her existence, for being an unscrupulous man and tired of what had been only a passing caprice he had sold his mistress to Gomez, never

supposing that in a few months she was to give birth to a daughter.

Lakhmi was well named. Nothing could surpass her youthful grace. She possessed all the elegance of the native race, united to the distinguished features and bearing of the Indian. Her face was beautiful and the pure blood coursed through her veins under the slightly bronzed tint of her fine skin. Her black hair, fine and silky, fell down to the beautifully moulded feet, and the fresh crimson lips parted in a soft child-like smile, displaying two rows of pearls. Expressive features completed this radiant beauty.

Without analyzing all the details of her various charms, Sanchez was fascinated. The first time he saw Lakhmi, he found her beautiful, and unconsciously he fell violently in love with her.

He had already known her some time, but the slave had been a child, and it was only when she had attained the age at which a young girl's beauty develops into womanhood, that the young marquis was attracted to her.

But at the same time another sentiment awoke in his breast. As soon as he recognized the existence of his passion, his pride as a nobleman rebelled against the idea.

He tried to overcome it, but failed.

He then cursed his love and while in his heart worshiping Lakhmi, he almost hated her, not being generous enough to pardon her for the humiliating admiration she had inspired him with.

A Marquis d'Alvilla in love with a slave.

Sanchez crimsoned with shame.

Three years later, less timid and more imperious, the marquis would have forced his love on the young girl; but he recoiled before this extreme act of tyranny and while deploring his love, tried to make her share it.

Delicacy of feeling disguised his restrained desires, and he very soon caressed the charming dream of inspiring Lakhmi to love him and be no more a master in her eyes, but the most tender and submissive of lovers.

He might have been able to realize this dream, but tormented between his weakness and pride, hesitating between these two sentiments, while trying to please, he only succeeded in making himself feared. Then also, an invincible obstacle prevented the young Indian girl from taking any tender interest in him, even had she been able to overcome the prejudices inherent in one of her condition. If the distance separating him from

the slave was comprehended by Sanchez, Lakhmi appreciated still more the gulf existing between master and slave.

Nevertheless, this social abyss was but vaguely measured by her, for Sanchez did not betray himself by words. His eyes and acts spoke alone.

"Ah! Lakhmi! Lakhmi," he would cry to himself, "what cursed demon has placed you in my way. Why are you so beautiful, unsympathetic girl that you are? A slave! I am in love with a slave? No, it cannot be true; I hate and despise her; she is not worthy either of my love or caresses; she is not a woman, only a slave. Yet she is beautiful—Oh! yes, beautiful—But she will love me!—she must! oh! yes, it must be as I wish!"

Then his pride would rebel.

"Fool," he would add, "take care that no one finds this out, hide your lamentable weakness from every one! Have you fallen so low that you will solicit the love of a slave!—But—I cannot resist, I must tell her of my love. Yes, I will tell her!"

He hastened to Lakhmi's hut; but as soon as he had crossed the threshold, his lips, so anxious to reveal their secret, refused to perform their office.

The master assumed the ascendancy, and the

lover yielded his place to him before the slave had time to raise her beautiful eyes to his.

On one occasion, however, this change did not take place so promptly.

"Ah! it is you, master?" said Lakhmi, surprised at Sanchez's abrupt arrival.

"Yes, did I frighten you?"

"No, master."

"Master!" repeated Sanchez, "do not call me by that name!"

"But—"

"It is my wish!"

And by a singular contrast the accent in which he issued this command was not so much a master's as a tyrant's.

Lakhmi looked down submissively.

Sanchez took a chair and sat down.

"Come here, nearer," said he, after a short silence pointing to a rush mat which lay at his feet.

The slave obeyed in silence.

"Look at me," added Sanchez. "Look at me steadily. What do you read in my eyes?"

"I see that you are good."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

Sanchez bit his lips. His eyes flashed.

"And do my looks convey no other feeling to you?" he continued in an irritated voice.

"Well, yes."

"Speak."

"But I dare not—"

"Speak I tell you, I order it!—"

"Only they make me a little afraid!"

"Afraid?" exclaimed Sanchez quickly dropping Lakhmi's hand that he had been almost crushing in his own. "You are afraid of me?"

"A little, yes."

"Foolish girl! what have I ever done to inspire you with any fear?"

"Nothing, master, it is true; but I have been taught to fear you."

"Who taught you?"

"Those others, who belong to you as I do."

"Am I then cruel to them?"

"Ah! no; but you are the master."

"And because they are slaves, they tremble—Oh! the cowards! Gomez and my father are right; they are not men; they have neither heart nor soul like us, slaves are all alike."

Unsuspicious of the true cause of his anger, Lakhmi was terrified. Hardly knowing what she was saying she murmured:

"The master is right. I am only a poor slave, and have no right to any heart."

These words changed the current of the marquis' thoughts.

"And if you had this right!" he cried. "Come, now, let us be frank together, if to-morrow you were free?"

"Free—To what purpose?"

"To prove to you that I do not wish to constrain your feelings in any way—who would you love?"

Lakhmi hesitated.

"Would you love me?"

The slave misunderstood, she thought the question was asked distrustfully.

"Never!" she cried out in an accent of unaffected terror.

"Fool!" hissed Sanchez as he raised his whip.

Lakhmi crouched down to receive the blow, but the sight of her beautiful shoulders withheld Sanchez, who, ashamed of his brutality, hurriedly left the hut in a state of excitement bordering on madness.

That night the tigers fared badly. Gomez shot one and Sanchez two.

CHAPTER III.

DOMINIQUE.

By answering: "Never," as Lakhmi had done to the marquis when he asked her, if, as a free woman, she would love him, she had not spoken falsely, as for some time past her heart had been in another's keeping.

Hers was a tender heart, imperiously demanding to be loved.

Simple minded and free from coquetry, unconscious of the irresistible power of her rare beauty, she considered she was bound as a slave to submit humbly to what she imagined was a mere caprice of temper in Sanchez.

Never questioning the inferiority of her race, her prejudices and innocence prevented her from divining what was passing in the young man's heart.

His fits of harsh temper saddened Lakhmi, without affecting her in any other way, and his manner was to her simply childlike and inexplicable.

Besides, she loved another, with a love as pure as her own heart, as virginal as her own beauty.

He who had won her heart was a young mulatto as handsome as she was beautiful, and also, one of the marquis' slaves.

He was called Dominique.

Having been both born on the plantation, Lakhmi and Dominique grew up together; their minds had opened at the same time; had shared each other's joys and sorrows, and without being exactly aware of it yet, their affection was without limit.

In the evening, when the signal had been given to stop work, they both withdrew to some secluded spot, and hand in hand wandered about the woods indulging in endless conversations.

Lakhmi believed she loved Dominique as her brother, and he never stopped to question himself why, when near his lovely companion, his heart beat so quickly, why, when she was no longer near, her image occupied his thoughts.

There were no doubts existing between them, no fears, no trifling quarrels.

Dominique would have given his life to spare Lakhmi one tear, and she would have done the same to save him from the smallest grief.

Their love was like a harmony rising from their hearts as incense ascends to Heaven.

The day arrived, however, when the young mulatto discovered the nature of the affection with which Lakhmi had inspired him.

It was owing to Sanchez that his eyes were unsealed.

Several scenes equally strange to the one we have described had taken place between master and slave.

Lakhmi, still ignorant of Sanchez's violent passion, tried in vain to discover the cause of his conduct, and maintained towards him her usual respectful and submissive manner.

The frequent visits of the young marquis to Lakhmi's hut, did not escape the notice of Dominique.

He questioned the young girl.

Lakhmi would not tell a falsehood, and besides, why should she try to do so.

Her recital was a veritable revelation to the listener; instinctively, he divined what was passing in Sanchez's mind.

Then since up to a certain point his master's conduct would be explained, he concluded also, that what he himself felt for Lakhmi, was not only friendship, but love.

"What do you think of it all?" demanded Lakhmi, when she had confided everything to him.

Dominique seemed as if awakening from a dream.

"Nothing," said he at last; "a mere fancy on the part of the master, that is all."

For the first time he deceived her.

As the young girl spoke, a feeling of intense agony awoke within his heart, and he could hardly restrain a cry of pain.

It was like something eating into his heart, and all Lakhmi's efforts were unsuccessful in winning him for an instant from the fit of deep gloom, into which he had fallen.

Tired of wasting her attempts to rouse him, Lakhmi prepared to leave, attributing his unaccustomed sulkiness to some sudden caprice, when suddenly a tear from the mulatto's eyes dropped on her hand.

"Tears," she cried, "tears, Dominique, my brother! And why? Take pity on me and speak. I implore you, tell me, what is grieving you?"

"No, no, it is nothing; I am not crying!—"

"Ah! you are unkind to wish to deceive me! Do I not tell you all my troubles?"

"Well," said Dominique, after a moment's reflection, "I promise to tell you all this evening."

Lakhmi did not dare to insist. She went on her way slowly, after looking sadly and reproachfully at her lover.

On returning to the hut, Lakhmi found Sanchez there.

"Where do you come from?" said he to her in a tone which betrayed his annoyance at being kept waiting.

"I was over there, near the palm trees, master."

"What were you doing there?"

"Talking."

"With whom?"

"Dominique."

The young marquis had already remarked that the young girl was more frequently to be seen with the mulatto than with her other companions.

On hearing his name pronounced, his jealousy awoke, and changed his annoyance into rage.

"I forbid you to speak to him or anyone else. You are very often with him!"

"With whom, master?"

"Dominique."

"We have been brought up together on the plantation; he is my brother."

"Ah! your brother; indeed—I will have him sold!"

"Oh! my master, you will not do that!"

"Why?"

"Because Dominique is a good slave, devoted and obedient, and he loves his master."

"You defend him warmly."

"I only do him justice. Is there any one on the whole plantation more zealous, more skilful, or more trustworthy than he?"

Lakhmi became animated in singing her friend's praises. The fear of losing him had brought the crimson to her cheeks, and enhanced the brilliancy of her beauty.

The young marquis yielded to the fascination the loveliness of the young girl possessed over him. His anger cooled.

"I promise you not to sell him, then," he said.

"Ah! master, how good you are!"

And seizing Sanchez's hand she covered it with kisses and tears while she knelt at his feet.

The contact of her fresh young lips thrilled through him, but her tears had an irritating effect; so raising Lakhmi with a haughty gesture, he continued in a cold, hard voice:

"No, I will not sell Dominique, but on one condition."

"What condition, master?"

"That from this time forward you do not go with him more than with the other slaves."

Lakhmi's hesitation was great.

"I promise," she said at last.

At this moment a voice was heard outside the hut.

It was Gomez who was heard to say:

"What are you about here? Are you asleep? Come, get up, you are not fed for the purpose of doing nothing!"

"I am going to work, Master Gomez," was the reply.

The sound of a light, active step was heard on the ground.

Lakhmi turned pale.

"Who were yo speaking to?" demanded Sanchez going out of the hut.

"That lazy fellow Dominique who lay sleeping there like a crocodile in the sun."

"Dominique!" repeated the marquis angrily. "Ah! so Dominique was there?"

"Yes, there, lying down close to the hut."

"He was listening; acting the spy!—Oh! so he loves her also!" said Sanchez to himself.

"I have sent him back to work," pursued Gomez. "But what is the matter with you, sir? You are very pale."

"I am furious with this slave who wastes his time, Gomez. He must be severely punished."

"O!" replied the steward, "it is the first time such a thing has happened, and I am astonished to find him loafing, for as a rule, he is industrious and active, but if it happens again, he will catch it."

"You are too indulgent, Gomez."

"Only a few days ago you reproached me with being quite the opposite."

"A few days ago it was different, the fault committed was not so great."

"Allow me to tell you, sir, that your memory is at fault. It was on account of a fight, and you made me set the two combatants at liberty after I had them in irons."

"For the future, I shall never contradict your orders, Gomez," said the marquis, growing more calm. "Clemency, I see, is not appreciated; they seem to count upon it too surely here."

"Monsieur le Marquis will do just as he thinks best," said Gomez as he walked away.

Lakhmi had not lost one word of the conversation.

Standing close against the door, she had listened attentively to the conversation between Gomez and the marquis.

When Sanchez re-entered the hut, she rushed forward in order to implore him to spare Dominique.

Her master did not give her time to speak.

"You see," said he to her, "the one you were praising so highly a few moments ago, deserves severe punishment; but a hundred strokes of the palmatoria* will cure him of his lazy habits."

Oh! master, you will pardon him, be merciful!"

"Well then! say nothing more about it," said Sanchez, whom a sudden idea seemed to make calm. "I will pardon him this time, but I do not wish you to speak any more to this Dominique, and I order you to avoid him."

Lakhmi thought only of the torture she was to save the mulatto from.

"I promise you, master."

"Then that will do; keep your word, if you don't, you will incur my serious anger."

Uttering these threatening words with suppressed rage, Sanchez went out.

"Oh!" he exclaimed when he found himself alone, "if they love each other, woe to them!"

* A rod used for punishing slaves.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OATH.

For a few weeks, which appeared very long to them, Lakhmi and Dominique to whom the master's orders were given without delay, carefully avoided meeting each other.

Sanchez kept a strict watch over them, and paid no more visits to the young slave's hut.

Lakhmi's respect for her master was an obstacle in the way of her loving him; but was it possible she preferred Dominique, a mulatto, a slave!

He recommenced his visits to the hut but, singularly and most inexplicably, his interviews with Lakhmi were calm, and the time was passed in carrying on a forced conversation without interest to either.

Sanchez had determined to be patient, resolved to leave everything to time and chance.

Dominique's love was too great and his fears too violent to enable him to support this state of matters any length of time.

According as the young master recovered his calm, the love of the two he wished to separate increased in intensity.

At any price, Dominique was determined to speak to Lakhmi, and she also could not resist showing this desire.

One evening, at the hour when the slaves were in the habit of resting before their huts, after the torrid heat of the day, the two having met by chance, ran away together without saying a word, but moved by the same thought, went in the direction of a shady place.

Dark clouds covered the horizon portending one of those fierce and terrible storms to be seen in southern countries.

Dominique clasped the girl's hand in his own, saying in a low eager voice, as he led her along:

"At last! at last!"

When they stopped, the mulatto threw a searching glance around to assure himself that they had not been followed and seizing the beautiful girl in his arms, pressed her convulsively to his breast.

"Oh! what torture I have endured! Six weeks, six centuries without seeing or speaking to you, without being able to tell you that I was suffering. Oh, Lakhmi! I thought I would have died; but

this moment has made me forget everything!"

"Do you think I did not suffer as well as you from having to obey the master?"

"The master!" said Dominique, a look of indescribable hatred passing over his face as he said the words.

"Good God! Dominique, what is the matter with you?" cried Lakhmi terrified.

"What is the matter with me? You ask me that? It is this: the master loves you, and I am jealous of him!"

The young girl was so far from expecting such a terrible revelation, that she did not at first, quite comprehend its full meaning.

"Yes, the master loves you," resumed Dominique, "and if Gomez did discover me near your hut, it was because I suspected him, and I confess I went there to hear what he had to say to you."

"The master loves us all!"

Dominique again seized the young girl's hands in his and holding her before him scrutinized her features carefully. Her air of simple, sincere candor, banished all his doubts.

"That is not what I mean," he continued, "the master loves you as I do, he is in love with you."

"In love with me, he, the master! it is impossible!"

"It is true, however, and I am sure of it, since I am jealous of him, as he is of me."

"You are in love with me, you, Dominique?" questioned Lakhmi with innocent candor. "Then you love me now more than ever you did before?"

"Listen to me, Lakhmi. When Gomez surprised me listening to the master, his words of hatred against me immediately awoke the same feelings of fierce jealousy in my heart against him. He hates me, because he guesses how I love you, and I hold him in horror for the same reason; but still, in the midst of my violent rage, I acknowledge his power! He is the master, and I am only a poor slave."

"Oh! how you must have suffered!"

"One thought helped to sustain me. I hoped you loved only me!"

"You alone, in all the wide, wide world, and with all my heart!"

The young man's eyes rested on Lakhmi with a look of radiant gratitude.

"At one moment, mad with despair and anger, I was on the point to enter the hut, seize his gun, and kill him before you!"

"Hush!"

"I would have done it, I tell you, only I had

faith in your true heart. The idea of this crime still haunts me.

"Hush, Dominique—You must not say such things!"

"Ah! you cannot imagine the agony I endure. I saw him go into your hut daily, while I was forbidden access. Oh! Lakhmi, you cannot comprehend my sufferings, but listen to me. If to-morrow you saw me prefer another slave to you, and leave you for her, what would you do?"

"I would kill myself!"

"Well! it is jealousy that would make you kill yourself."

"I love you then also, Dominique?—Oh! I am sure of it, for that frightful supposition of yours, a moment ago, sent a thrill through my heart like the blade of a knife. You will never love anyone but me, will you?"

"Can you doubt it? But do you understand the horror of our position, since the master loves you too! If we are never to meet again, I will kill the marquis; if we persist in speaking to each other, he will kill us both. Lakhmi, we must fly!"

"Fly!" repeated the girl terror stricken.

"This very night, this very instant, and so far away that he will never find us again!"

"But it is death to fly; the jaguar and starvation awaits us in the mountains!"

"Possibly, but at least, we can die together. Come, can you make up your mind?"

Lakhmi remained silent.

"Take pity on me and answer," pleaded Dominique. "I beg you, think of our love."

"What do you wish me to say? To die in the jungles or under the taya of the master, provided we have not to part, what does it matter? But to fly, we slaves, will it not be stealing from the master?"

"And does he not try to steal your heart from me?" cried the mulatto, and overcome by his past anxieties and the keen emotion of the moment, he could not restrain a sob, as he buried his head in Lakhmi's luxuriant hair.

The young girl simply clasped his hands affectionately in hers.

Dominique hesitated a moment, but at the thought that he might one day have to see the girl he worshiped belong to the marquis, he forgot the jaguars of the jungles, the serpents in the rocks, the crocodiles in the lakes and streams, and his eyes yet bearing the traces of tears, exclaimed:

"Lakhmi, we must fly! If you love me, do not

refuse, otherwise, I will think you are not indifferent to the master, and I will kill you for such cowardice and falsehood."

"Grief is making you unjust, Dominique; I love no one but you. Let us go!"

"You agree to follow me?"

"I would brave anything rather than leave you."

"Oh! my dearest, your soul is as great as your love! Thank you, and now listen again. This project of flight occurred to me before to-day. I have been making preparations for it. I have buried not far from here, at the foot of a palm tree, all that we shall require in the way of arms and provisions. And now, follow me; we will go and find our treasure, and then run away."

They started off, but before they had advanced ten steps their passage was barred by some one.

Dominique stopped short, terrified, the color receding from his lips, as he recognized Sanchez.

And his slave nature asserted itself as he bent his head, and watched the whip which the young marquis carried in his hand. But the hand remained motionless and the whip was not raised.

Lakhmi stood nailed to the spot in terror. She stared at Sanchez without seeing him. The marquis looked at them both in silence for some time as if

he relished the horror which his sudden appearance had inspired in the two lovers, and then in a quiet, calm voice, which contrasted strangely with what was passing in his mind:

"Where were you going?" he asked them.

"We were taking a walk," hazarded Dominique.

"Rather far from the plantation, it seems to me. Make haste back, it is late!" ordered Sanchez.

The calm voice with which he uttered these words surprised Dominique and Lakhmi to such a degree that they instinctively obeyed.

When they were sufficiently far from the marquis to ensure his not overhearing them:

"You see, Dominique," said Lakhmi, "the master is good; your fears were unreasonable. Let us be grateful to Heaven for having encountered him, since he has prevented us from doing what was wrong. If he had loved me as you think, his manner just now proves that he is not jealous, so he does not do so any longer."

"Cease to love you, when he has once done so, Lakhmi! is it possible?"

"You think so, because you are only a slave, like me; but the master can choose from the most beautiful and wealthy girls in Fernambone, and he does not think of me, Dominique."

"Heaven grant you may be right! And yet, under the calm tone of his words, I thought I discovered a smothered feeling of anger."

"No, you are mistaken; he seemed to me to look simply indifferent."

"Perhaps you are right, I almost think it; yet I dare not hope so."

"But look, he has not even followed us!"

But this new proof of his indifference did not convince Dominique, who yielding to an unconquerable presentiment, cried out suddenly:

"Lakhmi, if you never see me again, promise that you will never forget me!"

"I will remember you to my last breath," said the young girl solemnly. "But why do you ask me to promise, and why do you fear we are to be separated?"

"A secret voice tells me! Come now, if the master sells me, as he threatened a short time before?"

"I will leave this plantation and follow you were it a hundred leagues distant."

"And if the master disposes not only of my body, but of my life, what then?"

"He will die by my hand," exclaimed Lakhmi.

"You will avenge me then?"

"I swear it. I will only live to avenge you. May Heaven's curse fall on me if I fail to keep my oath!"

The Indian girl pronounced these words simply and solemnly. The marquis, had he heard her, could not have refrained from shuddering.

"Thank you for your promise," replied Dominique, "and now, let us trust to the mercy of Heaven!"

They had arrived at the huts.

"Good-bye," said Dominique, and after assuring himself once more that Sanchez had not followed them, he took Lakhmi in his arms and pressed as tender a kiss on her forehead as had ever been offered by human lips.

"To-morrow," said she with a loving smile.

"To-morrow, perhaps!" replied the mulatto, kissing his hand in a last adieu to his beautiful companion.

CHAPTER V.

THE JEALOUS MASTER.

The Marquis Alphonse d'Aviella, no longer took any active part in the administration of his estate. Leaving to Gomez the management of the plantation and sale of the crops, and to his son all that concerned the general superintendence, he never interfered except in very grave cases. His age made indolence grateful and demanded rest. He visited his estates rarely and when, by chance, he underwent this unusual fatigue, it was in an easy carriage. He was accompanied, on these occasions, by numerous slaves, and the chief mission of the blacks consisted in avoiding anything which could render the journey irksome.

M. d'Aviella generally passed his evenings lying in a hammock swung close to the ground, suspended in a large room, which the old aristocrat dignified by the name of study. He read until sleep invited him to retire for the night, and during these daily readings, two slaves were exclusively occupied

in shielding him from the mosquitoes, attracted by the flame of a lamp suspended from the ceiling. A few moments after Dominique had left Lakhmi, the door of the study was opened.

The marquis was lying in his hammock reading. Sanchez came in. He was very pale, but as he remained in the shade at the moment when the old man made a movement to see who had entered, the marquis could not notice the livid hue overspreading his son's countenance.

The mulatto had not been mistaken when he told Lakhmi that Sanchez's quiet manner was only a cloak to hide his dark and terrible anger. Only, however serious his apprehensions might be, he was far from guessing the reality. Sanchez had overheard all the conversation of the two lovers. Seeing them hastening to the woods he had followed, and had watched them at not more than ten steps distance. Rendered desperate, and humiliated on discovering that not only was the mulatto his rival, but also possessed his secret; his indignation had been transformed into a feeling of implacable hatred. Rage and jealousy made his temples throb like two forge-hammers. Playing with his gun, he thought at one moment of shooting the two slaves dead at his feet. But he

hesitated. Lakhmi was too beautiful to kill, Dominique too blamable for daring to love, for such a slight punishment as a peaceful death would afford. He listened, and drank his cup of humiliation to the very dregs.

Mad with rage, he meditated a crime. Dominique was doubly guilty; he had committed a grave offense in addition to his daring to love. He had decided to run away, that is, to be guilty of theft. He merited punishment then, not because he loved Lakhmi, but because he had wished to entice a young girl, another slave, with him in his flight. This was all Sanchez needed.

He persuaded himself that he would only be doing an act of justice in obtaining an order from his father to inflict the most terrible tortures on Dominique.

His heart bounded when he saw the mulatto embrace the beautiful slave after having received her terrible oath. A second time he levelled his gun at Dominique, but again he lowered his weapon. His vengeance could not be satisfied with the simple death of his rival. He would make him suffer first. Yet Sanchez had not a vicious nature; but his disappointed love and furious jealousy had deprived him of all reason.

He was the living impersonation of hatred.

"Oh! I will kill them both," he swore to himself; "but with a terrible death! To dare me, their master, me!"

He arrived home still quivering with rage and presented himself at an advanced hour at his father's room.

"Ah! is it you?" observed the old man tranquilly; "what brings you now?"

"A painful duty, father."

"What do you wish to tell me?"

"That you must sign an order for Gomez."

"What order?"

"One to punish Dominique."

"Dominique?" repeated the marquis trying to remember.

"Yes, Dominique, a slave on the plantation."

"I hardly understand what you wish me to do, my son, or who you are speaking about!"

"He is one of the workers; that is why you have not noticed him, father."

"Very possibly," said M. d'Aviella indolently.

"And what has this Dominique done whom you wish to punish so severely that an order for executing the sentence is necessary?"

"He has been guilty of the most serious crimes

a slave can commit. He tried to run away!"

"To run away!" repeated the marquis indignantly.

"Yes, father, and that is not all; abusing the confidence of another slave who was fond of him, he had—persuaded her to fly with him."

"That is a very grave offense indeed, Sanchez; why did they wish to fly?"

"They were not questioned."

"That must be done. How was their project discovered?"

The young man was slightly embarrassed at this last very direct question.

"It was Gomez," he replied after a moment's hesitation, "who surprised them when they were just about to dig up the arms and provisions which they had buried for their further use."

"You are right, Sanchez, this Dominique deserves punishment."

"He deserves to be made an example of, father, for other slaves will imitate him very soon if you do not take energetic measures in this instance."

"Above all things, I wish to be just."

"It is in the name of justice I am speaking, father."

"While agreeing with you as to the necessity of

a serious punishment, I find you too severe, Sanchez, and you know, I do not approve of severe punishment."

"Yes, I know; and that is why I am so persistent; clemency in this instance would be more than weakened and might prove before long, an irreparable error. They take advantage of your kindness, and Gomez, encouraged by it, is not severe enough. Work is not so well done and has been advancing very slowly of late."

"This is the first time I have heard you speak of all this, my son."

"That is true, but if I did not do so, it was to save you from the annoyance of occupying yourself about these details; I counted upon Gomez, hoped that things would improve, and order be re-established; but, unfortunately, I have been deceived. Dominique's conduct will be imitated. However lightly it may weigh on them, slaves always feel the weight of their chain and instinctively desire to break it. There is, at this moment, among ours, a rebellion fermenting, which it is my duty to acquaint you with. A rising, a revolt, may break out at any moment, if you do not show that the hand which rules them does know how to punish when it is necessary."

"If that is your opinion, give Dominique a hundred strokes of the *palmatoria* on his hands, since our safety demands that he should suffer for others."

"The *palmatoria* only? You cannot mean it, father!"

"But I do. A hundred strokes. It seems to me that the punishment is quite severe enough to recall the more refractory to a sense of their duty."

"What punishment will we administer for slight misdemeanors if we make use of the *palmatoria* for a crime. The *taya* is what is necessary!"

"The *taya*! No, no; I have no desire to kill even the most culpable of our slaves. I would prefer selling them."

Sanchez could not repress a movement of anger, for he felt he would have some difficulty in conquering his father's obstinacy on this point. He resolved therefore, to have recourse to a ruse to attain his ends.

"There is no reason why death should be the inevitable result," he resumed; "I know that the strokes of the *taya* are terrible, but the guilty man in this case, is a robust young fellow."

"You know, Sanchez, that the strongest man must succumb under the strokes of this murderous weapon!"

"That depends on the number given."

"That is true."

"You had better leave the whole matter to me. Sign an order to give Dominique the *taya*; leave a blank for the number of strokes. I shall watch over the mulatto, and I promise you not to allow more than he can bear with safety. He will recover in a few days, the desired effect will have been produced and we will sell him afterwards as soon as possible."

"There is some wisdom in your advice; give me pen and paper, and I will do as you wish. Tomorrow, I will instruct Gomez to take his orders from you without waiting for any written permission from me. You are now a man, and I wish to leave everything in your hands."

A look of triumph lighted up Sanchez's features as his father wrote out an order and signed it.

Sanchez took the order and writing the words "hundred," on the blank left by his father, carried the order to Gomez, who on seeing it exclaimed with astonishment:

"But it will be his death."

"It is by my father's orders," said Sanchez coldly, "and must be done. Go and see to the necessary preparations and have the sentence carried into effect immediately."

When all was ready, and while Sanchez stood by in silence, Gomez approached him and in a voice full of emotion said:

"In the name of the friendship you design to bear me, Monsieur le Marquis, I implore you, wait until to-morrow."

"Do what I tell you, and at once. I wish it!"

Gomez went away and accompanied by the executioners entered Dominique's hut.

On seeing the *taya* which one of them carried:

"I expected you," said the mulatto. "I am ready to die."

When Sanchez saw Gomez go in the direction of his victim's hut with the two men, he said aloud:

"Now that I have secured him, let me look after her!"

And he walked off to Lakhmi's hut, which was situated at the opposite extremity of the plantation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TAYA.

Sanchez had only gone about half way to the hut when he was compelled to stop. Emotion, hatred, anger, all the strong feelings he had yielded to since he had surprised the lovers together caused a rush of blood to the heart. For a moment a feeling of remorse overcame him. Dominique's fate appalled him. He already seemed to hear the whistling of the cruel lash of the murderous whip; saw the blood flowing in streams from the mulatto's wounds, and his rival crushed and dying. The thought occurred to him to retrace his steps, and give orders to Gomez to defer executing the sentence until the following day, but he recalled Lakhmi's words when she told the mulatto that she loved him.

The state of the atmosphere had a great deal to do with Sanchez' feverish excitement. The air was charged with electricity, and dense vaporous clouds hung close to the ground. The heaviness

of the air seemed to bind his forehead as with a circlet of iron. At about twenty paces from the hut he stopped.

"It is you, master?" said a voice coming from behind the tall grass.

"Yes, Manoel."

Then a black figure rose up and advanced to the marquis.

"Well," said Sanchez.

"Nothing has moved; she is still in her hut."

"No one has tried to get in?"

"No one, master."

"When was the light put out?"

"About an hour ago."

"Then you think she is asleep?"

"I am sure of it."

"How?"

"I listened a moment ago with my ear against the door and her regular breathing proved to me that she must be sound asleep."

"That is well. Go to Gomez, bring his gun and cartouche box, then go and saddle Gazella and wait for me with her at the far end of the great avenue."

"I am going, master," said the negro turning away.

Sanchez called him back.

"One word more. Manage so that no one sees you."

"You may rely on me, master."

And Manoel departed running.

The different orders which he had already executed with the exception of the last, had been given to him by the young marquis before going into his father's study.

As soon as Manoel was out of sight, Sanchez knocked at the door of the hut.

There was no answer.

The young man gave a louder knock.

A slight movement was heard, and the young slave girl's voice demanded:

"Is it you, Dominique?"

Suddenly awakened from her first sleep, Lakhmi had pronounced the first name which her heart had whispered to her, never reflecting that at this advanced hour it was hardly probable that the one who was knocking could be the mulatto.

On hearing his rival's name uttered by the girl he loved, Sanchez' still wavering resolve became irrevocably fixed.

A cloud of blood seemed to pass before his eyes, and he had to exercise violent restraint over himself in order to answer calmly:

"No, it is I, the master; open!"

Then, without waiting any longer, he pushed the door which was not securely fastened, roughly open, and entered the hut, without paying any attention to the young girl's cry of alarm.

"You did not expect me then?" he said, in a mocking voice.

"The master is always welcome," replied the young girl humbly.

"Find a light," he ordered imperiously.

With trembling hands, Lakhmi did as she was ordered.

"You would rather see Dominique here than me, would you not, since, when I knocked, you thought it was he."

"If I did say his name, master, it was because I thought the night was over and my brother had come to awaken me."

"Your brother?" repeated Sanchez with a sneer. "He is in the habit of coming here at daybreak, then?"

"Yes, master."

"In spite of my having forbidden him?"

"He does not come now, I swear it. I have only spoken to him one time, this evening."

"You lie! You have both deceived me."

"Oh! master, how can you think so?"

Lakhmi's magnificent hair had become undone during her sleep, and now fell in long masses to the ground.

Never had Sanchez seen her look so beautiful.

Then by an inexplicable contradiction of his ill regulated mind, he forgot his hate, the fate of his rival, and thought of nothing but his love.

"No," he thought, "she deceives herself; it is impossible she can prefer the mulatto to me. It is her shyness which misleads her. I must try to reassure her."

Then aloud:

"Lakhmi, listen to me."

"Speak, master."

"You disobeyed me this evening."

"It is true. The master wishes to punish me?"

"No, did I ever threaten to do so?"

"No, you were merciful and good to the poor slave."

"Yet, I knew all!"

"What about, master?" demanded the slave.

"About your wish to fly with Dominique!"

Lakhmi started.

"I overheard all your conversation!" pursued the young marquis.

At this avowal, the slave trembled in every limb and was powerless to utter a word.

"Don't be afraid," continued Sanchez; "I only tell you this to prove how kind I have been."

"Then I must thank you on my knees!"

And clasping her hands together, she knelt at Sanchez's feet, with her eyes fixed on him with such grateful acknowledgment, that he hardly knew what he was doing.

The attitude displayed her exquisitely rounded shoulders, looking white in contrast to the glossy black of her hair which half veiled them. Sanchez stood looking at her, intoxicated at the sight of her divine beauty.

"Do you really wish to prove that you are sensible of my goodness," said he in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Oh! yes, master."

"Very well then! promise to answer the questions I am going to put to you frankly."

"Question me, master, I am ready."

"Why did you wish to fly with Dominique?— Ah! do not be afraid of me; I have been severe sometimes, but I promise not to be so again; speak truthfully and be not afraid."

Sanchez had yielded to an illusion; blinded by

his dreams of love, he felt sure of coming out the conqueror in the struggle in which he had engaged with his inferior rival. In spite of Sanchez's smiling demeanor, Lakhmi kept silent.

"You hesitate?" resumed the young man, "well, I will speak for you. You wished to fly because you love Dominique, was it not so?"

"Yes," said Lakhmi subdued and frightened.

"Are you quite certain of that? Have you sufficiently questioned your own heart, are you quite sure?"

"I think I am."

"Well, you are mistaken. What is Dominique after all? Only a slave, incapable of defending you at the slightest sign from my father."

"And what more am I, myself, than a slave?"

"You! You are beautiful, more beautiful than the loveliest among free women."

"Dominique is handsome."

"Have you never seen any other man who appeared to you as handsome as he is?"

"I have seen, perhaps, as handsome, but I have never met any one to please me as much as he does."

"It is because he was the first to speak to you of love."

"He has only spoken to me of it once; it was only then I knew my own heart."

"But why do you love him?"

"How do I know?"

"Come, if to-morrow I made you rich, happy, could you not feel for me a little of the love you have for Dominique?"

"To say yes, would be deceiving you. No, master, I don't think so."

"I am young, rich, handsome like him."

"Oh! yes, master."

"Well, then."

"What can I say? It is not my fault. I belong to you, master, my body belongs to you, you can kill me if I offend you, but my heart belongs to him."

And seizing the marquis' hand, she was going to carry it to her lips; but Sanchez, who had lost all control over himself, pushed her away roughly and cried out:

"Foolish idiot!"

Lakhmi gazed at him terrified.

Sanchez's features were convulsed and his eyes flashed lightning.

He was convinced now that nothing he could do would make the girl love him.

Jealousy and anger again gained the ascendancy.

At this moment the thunder seemed to come nearer, and its rumblings became more sonorous.

"Master!—Master!"—cried out Lakhmi.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Sanchez with a frightful laugh, "you call to me!"

"But what have I done?"

"What have you done—what have you done—Ah! my God! is this slave mad?"

"Mad from terror and despair, it is true, master, have pity, control yourself!"

"And I, who thought I might forgive her!"

At that moment a yell of agony came from the other end of the plantation.

"Ah! it is Dominique's voice!" cried Lakhmi.

"You think so," said the young man intercepting her passage.

"I am sure of it. Master, what is happening?"

"You have dared to disobey, and you cannot guess?"

A second cry, more heartrending than the first, reached their ears.

"Ah!—Dominique—they are killing him! Let me pass, you can kill me afterwards if you like!"

"Where do you wish to go to?"

"To help Dominique."

"Very well, come then!"

And taking a firm hold of the young girl's wrist he dragged her violently out of the hut.

At that moment a bright flash of lightning illuminated the horizon. Sanchez walked hurriedly on towards the side opposite to where the cries came from.

"It is not there!" cried Lakhmi trying to resist.

"It does not matter, come."

No," she said, standing still and pulling against him, "I will not go farther!"

We will see."

"Have mercy! You are hurting me—Ah! I see now, you have deceived me. It is you, I know now, you who ordered that Dominique—But be merciful to him, master! I will not love him any more, I swear it! I will hate him, if you wish, but only spare him, let him live! let him live!"

"Oh! again that awful cry! I will—I will—"

She had fallen on her knees wild with terror.

But the marquis was inexorable and dragged her along the path, the small sharp stones cutting into Lakhmi's flesh as they advanced.

"Ah! you wished to see?—Well then, look there!"

They had arrived at a spot where a large clear-

ance afforded them an uninterrupted view of the plantation.

"Look, that is how I avenge myself!"

As he said these words, Sanchez took the young girl's head between his hands and held it in a certain direction from where a bright light shone. There, in the middle of a circle of lighted torches carried by negroes, Lakhmi saw a man firmly bound and lying at full length on his face, in such a position that his back was fully exposed. Near him, a big negro brandished the terrible taya, each stroke of which tore the skin off the victim, leaving an open wound from which the blood flowed copiously. A yell of agony followed each stroke. Never, in any similar torture, had the executioner struck with such force; but knowing that in Dominique's case death was inevitable, Gomez had given orders to try to bring the mulatto's sufferings to an end as quickly as possible.

The continual recurring flashes of lightning, seeming to give added effect to the rapid strokes of the cruel taya, as the groans of the now expiring victim, mingled with the rolling of the echoing thunder. Lakhmi was unable to bear the horror of it. In vain Dominique, summoning what little strength remained to him, sent forth a last appeal

in her direction; she did not hear him, she had fainted. Feeling her sinking on the ground, Sanchez took her up in his arms, and walking as quickly as his burden would allow, gained the spot where he had given orders to Manoel to wait for him with Gazella.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HUMAN FEAST.

Aided by the black, Sanchez placed the still unconscious girl in front of him on Gazella's saddle, to which he bound her firmly.

Shivering with terror at the sound of the cries which had reached his ears, Manoel obeyed his master without daring to say one word.

Sanchez mounted Gazella.

"Give me the gun and cartouche box. Now, as you value your life, you know and have seen nothing, or else, remember Dominique!"

This was the signal for the marquis' departure.

Using both spurs, he started off at a full gallop. In the darkness, his ride had something fantastic, recalling the exploits of some hero in an ancient ballad. He covered the space as if by magic, sometimes plunging in deepest darkness, again appearing bathed in the light of the vivid flashes which tore aside the thick veil of blackness with each clap of thunder.

The sight of Dominique's blood, his cries, the tumult of the storm, Lakhmi's avowals and the thirst for vengeance, made him feverish and giddy. The bounds of the spirited animal he rode also excited him to the pitch of madness, and helped to arouse Lakhmi from her swoon.

"Where am I?"

"With me, the master."

"Ah! the executioner!" exclaimed Lakhmi.

"Not yet," replied Sanchez, "not yet!"

And holding the young girl against him with such frenzy that one might have supposed he wished to strangle her, he spurred on Gazella with renewed fury.

"Dominique!" cried Lakhmi with a sob—"my poor Dominique."

"Peace, wretched girl, peace!"

Silence followed this imperious order, and nothing was now heard but the noise of the tempest until Sanchez stopped his horse.

He dismounted and led Gazella to a tree. That done, he untied Lakhmi, lifted her again in his arms, and entered a pathway which led up a hill, from which the water descended in torrents. He arrived after a rather steep ascent at a large deep ravine where the darkness seemed even more obscure. There he stopped.

"Give me your hands," he said.

Helpless from grief, Lakhmi mechanically obeyed. In an instant, Sanchez placed a strong cord around the slave's wrists and fastened them behind her back. The cord cut into her flesh, and Lakhmi gave a cry of pain. Sanchez took no notice, but with another cord dragged her roughly backwards to a tree to which he bound her, but instead of striking the young girl, as she expected, he withdrew to some distance, ascended the side of the ravine, lay down on the damp ground, with his loaded gun near his hand. From there, with clenched teeth, pale as a spectre, he fixed a look of hatred on his victim. All his love for her had vanished; hope, love, desires, his heart had banished all, leaving room only for vengeance.

Not having yet any idea of the frightful fate reserved for her, Lakhmi, placing her hope in God, prayed for Dominique and herself. Suddenly a roar of rage echoed through the rocks. A cry of wild terror answered it.

"Ah! the jaguars!"

Fright overcame her grief. Understanding at last Sanchez' infernal plan, Lakhmi gave way to her trembling fears and despair at the terrible death confronting her, and in a delirium of terror tried to escape from it.

“Master, it is the jaguar, he is coming—Master—mercy—mercy!”

The roars had now increased in loudness, announcing that the marquis' redoubtable accomplice was drawing nearer.

“Kill me, but with one blow, since I must die!” cried Lakhmi in a paroxysm of terror. “Oh! master, kill me. I will love you. I will love you. Ah! I am afraid! he is coming. Fire—mercy—fire!”

Sanchez's hair stood erect on his head. He levelled his gun. The young girl struggled in vain to escape from her bonds. But at last, worn out with the uselessness of her attempts, she stopped, but only to recommence with redoubled energy. Flashes of lightning lighted up this fearful scene at short intervals. The figure of the jaguar could be seen advancing nearer; then sudden a cry, one single cry, but indefinable, compressing a world of suffering, came from Lakhmi.

There in the midst of the silence which followed each clash of thunder, could be heard the awful sounds of bones cracking, flesh tearing, lapping up of blood, succeeded by the hideous, satisfied sighs of the jaguar as he licked his lips. At this moment, a detonation more formidable than any that had

yet been heard, crashed through the atmosphere, and the bolt fell within ten feet of where Sanchez lay.

"Kill me, fire!" cried Lakhmi.

The executioner listened to this last prayer. He lifted his gun, fired, and all was silent.

* * * * *

When, still under the empire of the indescribable horror which took possession of him almost as soon as he had accomplished his crime, Sanchez, having mounted Gazella found himself a short distance from the huts of the slaves, he perceived a band of men leaving one of the huts and walking in the direction of the mountains. It was Dominique's funeral convoy, who, with lighted torches, were wending their way in silence towards the burial grounds consecrated to the use of slaves belonging to the d'Aviella family.

PART II.

A HUSBAND'S VENGEANCE.

CHAPTER I.

A DAUGHTER TO MARRY.

Six years after the events we have narrated, one fine morning in October, two people were breakfasting together in the dining-room of a handsome residence in the Chaussè d'Antin in Paris. One was a man about sixty years of age, with a singularly mild and benevolent expression. His features were regular and bore that impress of austerity which work and a habit of reflection imparts. Hair, silvered by age, shaded a forehead rendered more expansive by the advance of time. His dress, although severely simple, was in the best taste, revealing the wearer to be a man of the world, as his features unmistakably denoted his benevolence of character. The other was a young girl of marvelous beauty. Tall, slender, exquisitely made, carrying on the form of a goddess, the

head of a seraph, framed in a luxuriant quantity of hair of that blonde hue, properly belonging to Faust's Marguerite. Her almond shaped eyes of a velvety blackness, and adorned with long silky lashes, imparted an uncommon air to her whole aspect while her hair, drawn back from her smooth white forehead, and simply confined by a comb at the back of her head, helped to heighten the effect.

On this occasion she was enveloped in a *peignoir* of pale-green silk, a cord of the same tint, encircled her graceful waist, and from the wide sleeves of this garment escaped waves of lace draping her shapely hands with their long fingers and rose tinted polished nails.

Perched on a chair near her was a little dog, with ears erect, and about the size of a man's shut fist, and as white as snow.

The repast was over. A footman in rich livery served the coffee. The aroma of mocha perfumed the apartment. The old man breathed in the warm vapors with a keen air of enjoyment, then tore open the bands of a paper lying within his reach and proceeded to glance over the contents rapidly.

"Come, Magnet," said the lovely girl, and taking the little dog on her knee, she began stuffing the animal with sugar.

"What a little darling you are!"

And the caresses recommenced.

The footman went out. As soon as he had disappeared, the old man laid down his paper, and began to stir in a mechanical manner the fragrant tonic in the cup of sevres placed before him. Although to an ordinary observer he appeared to be absorbed in this occupation, those who knew him better could have easily divined that his thoughts were fixed on some grave subject.

"What is the matter with you, father?" she asked, replacing Magnet on the chair from which she had taken him a few minutes before.

"I have something very serious to say to you, and on a subject which has occupied my thoughts for some months past, Clotilde," the old man replied after a short silence.

"For six months past! and you have never spoken of it until to-day?"

"Yes, I hoped you would have opened the subject in question yourself."

"How very solemn you look! You almost frighten me!"

"It is in fact, a very serious matter."

"Tell me what it is, father. I am ready to listen."

The old man carried his cup to his lips, and said:

"You are now eighteen years old, my child, and I will soon complete my sixtieth year; our only relation is my brother Samuel, my senior by ten years; death might come to either of us at any moment, without warning."

"Oh! father, what a thought!"

"It is only as a matter of prudent foresight that I wish you to regard it; there is no occasion to alarm yourself. Only answer me this: if such a misfortune did happen, what would you do, alone in the world?"

"How do I know! I could not survive your loss, my darling father. It would kill me."

"No, Clotilde, I lost your dear mother; and I also thought on that day, that it would be my last, and I am living still. By imposing these cruel sufferings of losing those we love, nature has, with admirable foresight, also given us the strength to support them. Time heals these severe wounds and softens them by transforming them in the end into memories sacred as they are sad. What I wish you to think about seriously now, is the choice of a husband."

"A husband!" exclaimed Clotilde, in surprise, "I have never even dreamed of it."

"That is why I speak of it. It is my duty as

your father to make you think of it, my spoiled darling."

"I hardly know how to answer you, father; the future is distant; the present suffices for me; I am as happy as I can be, and besides, I am heart whole up to the present. I cannot marry until I meet some one whom I like."

"Of course not, you are quite right."

"Here is my husband, Magnet, the most charming of all my admirers. Are you not, pet?"

The little dog received some fresh caresses.

"You are joking, Clotilde," said the old man; "do try to be serious, to please me, for a moment."

"Very well, father, now I promise to be serious."

"Admitting your principles to be all that is right, and without any desire to force your choice in any way, I think it necessary to impress upon you, that our respective positions demand imperiously that you marry."

"Demand?"

"Yes; an enormous responsibility rests on me. I have always supported it with happiness, it is true; but there are duties exacted in this life which cannot be neglected with impunity. You can have no desire to die an old maid?"

"I don't think so."

"Then why wait? Lovers are not wanting. You can choose among them, and I will approve your choice, whoever he may be, I promise you in advance, feeling confident that the one you prefer will be worthy of you. Take what time you may think necessary to decide, but do not defer searching your heart, with the firm resolution that it must not remain too long indifferent. I do not speak to you, my child, as a blind father, or as a rigid censor, but as an old friend, whose experience of life forces him to urge you to take an inevitable step."

"Very well, then, father! let it be so!" said Clotilde, "you have convinced me; I shall make my choice, I promise you."

"Within what length of time?"

"A year, father."

"I grant you that with all my heart. Marriage is the most serious act of one's life, above all for a woman; and must not be entered into too lightly."

He got up as he pronounced these last words and drawing his daughter towards him, pressed a loving kiss on her forehead.

At this moment, the footman entered.

"What is it, Joseph?" asked the old man.

"M. Duronget sends you this, sir," replied Joseph

holding out to his master a silver salver on which lay a visiting card.

The old man took it up and read it.

"The marquis!" he said; "is the marquis there?"

"He is waiting in the study for you, sir."

"I will go to him. You must excuse me, Clotilde. Business calls me away; we shall resume our conversation at another time."

"There is no necessity, father? Do we not understand each other perfectly?"

"That is fortunate! Then you will keep your promise?"

"I enter into a formal engagement to do so."

"Thank you, my dear child."

A second kiss, more tender than the last, accompanied this sentence of approval, and the old man went out with the footman.

The visitor who had sent in his card, to the banker, Isaac Schunberg, whose acquaintance we have just made, was the Marquis d'Aviella, to whose terrible jealousy Dominique and Lakhmi had been so tragically sacrificed. The cruel, savage tempered youth, had, in six years, developed into a handsome young man, with regular features, and a thoughtful expression of countenance, offering a perfect resemblance to the portrait we have already

described as being in the chateau. He got up as Schunberg entered the elegantly fitted up study.

"I fear I have disturbed you," he said advancing to meet the old man, "and beg to offer a thousand apologies."

"No apology is necessary, Monsieur le Marquis. I have been expecting you for some days, through a letter from the house of Cartellas & Co. of Rio, placing in my hands the sum of 500,000 francs to your credit, and announcing that you would soon arrive in Paris."

"The Marchioness d'Aviella, my mother, has accompanied me; we traveled more slowly than I expected we would. Since my father's death, the marchioness' health has been very delicate and we were obliged to rest at frequent stages between Marseilles and Paris. I wished to see you personally, Monsieur Schunberg, in order to inform you that, from information received from Cartellas & Co., my mother and I intend placing in your care the fortune we realised before leaving Brazil."

"I feel much honored by this mark of confidence, Monsieur le Marquis, and I will endeavor to show myself worthy of it."

"I have not the slightest doubt on that subject, Monsieur Schunberg. I have a draft here for three

million francs on your house, and I beg you will place it to our credit, I mean, my mother's and my own."

"Must the amount be divided in two different sums?"

"No. Two millions are for the marchioness, the third is for me. The division you mention will only be made on the day of my marriage."

Sanchez's visit to the banker terminated after exchanging some mutually polite compliments and making arrangements for receiving the large deposit to be made with Clotilde's father.

CHAPTER II.

A FORTUNE HUNTER.

Isaac Schunberg was one of the princes of the financial world, and Clotilde was his only child. The exceptionally cordial manner in which he had received Sanchez, arose from the manner in which the bank at Rio had recommended this new customer. The banker was not only a capable man of business, he was a sensible man knowing exactly what was due to every one. By recommending the banker to the marquis, the house of Cartillas & Co. at Rio, had only been led by the echo of public opinion.

The banker had been as good a husband as he was now a father; he had loved his wife fondly, and when an attack of peritonitis carried away the companion of his laborious life, he lavished on his new born child all the affection he had hitherto bestowed on the mother. Clotilde, besides, was the most attractive child possible to imagine, as she was now, at the date of the Marquis d'Aviella's

arrival in Paris, the most fascinating young girl to be seen. She was equal to Lakhmi in beauty, and nature, in making them both so beautiful, so perfect, and yet so different, seemed desirous of proving the multiplicity of the gifts at her disposal.

At the moment when we see Clotilde Schunberg for the first time, she had been in society for two years, where her introduction had made a great sensation, for she was not only one of the wealthiest heiresses in Paris, but one of the loveliest girls there.

The only woman who possessed any authority over her was the Baroness de Lunéville, a worldly member of the Faubourg aristocracy, of a skeptical, sarcastic turn of mind, little fitted to instill noble ideas of men and things into the heart of the banker's daughter. The admirers of Clotilde were transformed, thanks to the baroness' mocking wit, into fortune hunters, and besides, the young girl took too much delight in worldly pleasures to find time to attach the slightest importance to the numerous lovers sighing around her. In spite of this indifference, her admirers were not discouraged, and their number was always on the increase.

The one most worthy of attention was a handsome young fellow of about thirty, with fine features, distinguished manners and an accom-

plished man of the world in the highest acceptation of the term. Very amiable, with a highly cultivated intellect, and a ready wit, he had won for himself a reputation in the fashionable world. We have already seen him at the lawyer's, Dupuys.

His name was George de Maurange.

If Clotilde, besieged by admirers as she was, had had the time to distinguish any one individual, Monsieur de Maurange would have had more chance of fixing her attention than any other; but Clotilde accorded preference to no one. George waited patiently, for under the most attractive manner was hidden unvarying perseverance and an iron will. He had drawn these two useful qualities from the fountain head of misfortune. The last descendant of an honorable family in Poitoxn, George de Maurange was, at the age of twenty-one years, the possessor of a fortune of eight hundred thousand francs.

Launched into the brilliant whirlpool of the gay capital, he lost no time in joining the circle of those young fools, who considered it the acme of good taste and high style to ruin themselves in the most idiotic manner possible.

George, however, although rapidly following in the downward path, did not allow himself to in-

dulge in such prodigal wastefulness as might have been expected from one of his age and strong passions.

There was calculation in his character, and if he did spend his money lavishly, it was after he had counted each handful. Nevertheless, after a few years he had only forty thousand francs left with which to await the course of events; but experience had steeled his heart, and he was resolved henceforth to fight the battle of life bravely and unscrupulously.

With a good name, youth, many physical advantages, and forty thousand francs of capital, he had all that was necessary to command success.

He allowed himself two years to attain the end he had in view, win a fortune, and divided his pecuniary resources accordingly.

He formed a hundred different projects before deciding, and finally resolved to make a wealthy marriage.

Not desirous of coming too often in contact with his old companions in dissipation—people he considered useless—thanks to some distant connection he had in the Faubourg Saint Germain, he was soon presented to the most exclusive circles in Paris, where his wit and the charm of his manner,

marked his true character. In spite of this, George sought a long time for the Pactolus of eighteen years whom he desired to find, and on whom he had based all his hopes of a brilliant future; but at the moment, when tired of waiting he was on the point of proposing to a wealthy American girl, he met Clotilde Schunberg.

The moment he saw her, our fortune hunter swore that he would become the banker's son-in-law. From that hour he studied the young girl with an experienced eye, joining to all the aptitudes of a physiognomist, the power of a strong will. He alone read the true character of Clotilde, and seeing that he must leave to this innocent minded young girl the time to single him out for notice among the crowd of admirers in her train, he waited patiently the moment to take a decisive step, for everything depended on making himself loved by the banker's daughter.

De Maurange knew that Clotilde's princely fortune permitted her to marry a poor man, he also knew how Schunberg idolized his daughter, and was persuaded that the man of her choice would be accepted and welcomed by him as a son-in-law.

Rivals were not wanting, but a superstitious

feeling prevented him from being afraid of them. Clotilde in the end would be his, he felt sure.

Always in her close vicinity, at least in the eyes of the world, but most careful not to compromise her in any way, he gave her his undivided attention. To amuse, to interest her, was the one end he now had in view. But so far, to judge from Clotilde's manner in receiving this homage, his hopes were as far as ever from being realized.

She was gracious towards George, but nothing more, and the latter understood that any sudden avowal on his part would seriously compromise his chances.

De Maurange saw the moment arrive when to hesitate would be as grave a mistake as to declare himself too suddenly.

That happened at the end of the winter. He himself fixed his marriage for Easter, and decided to make every effort to obtain this end. His attentions became more marked. He danced with Clotilde several times in one evening, and made himself as witty as he was agreeable. At a ball given by the Baroness de Lunéville, who received once a fortnight on a princely scale, George went up to Clotilde to claim her for a waltz.

"Ah! Monsieur de Maurange, excuse me," she

said looking up with a lovely smile, "I had forgotten you and I have promised this dance to another gentleman."

The gentleman alluded to bowed coldly.

"He is a foreigner," said Clotilde, "and I know I can count upon your courtesy to yield your rights to him."

"How do you think I could refuse you, mademoiselle? But what am I to have in exchange for this very great sacrifice on my part?"

"An equivolant; the second waltz."

"Thanks, mademoiselle," said de Maurange bowing with a gracious smile, under which he concealed his annoyance.

Led away by her partner, Clotilde mingled with the waltzers.

While speaking to the banker's daughter, George had been careful to examine the stranger she had preferred to him.

The two men had only exchanged one look, but it seemed to establish a mutual enmity between them which was to last forever.

Strange presentiments do occur at times. Without being able to determine why, de Maurange divined a rival in the new comer, and the good looks and distinguished bearing of the stranger, convinced him he was one to be dreaded.

"Gaston, my dear fellow, do you know the man who is dancing with Mlle. Schunberg?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"He is a Portuguese Brazilian or rather, a Brazilian born in Portugal, and very wealthy."

"His name?"

"The Marquis Sanchez d'Aviella."

CHAPTER III.

THE QUARREL.

Isaac Schunberg took a sincere pleasure in introducing the young marquis to the many attractions of the capital. In society, his young friend could not but do him honor. Sanchez's dark beauty, the rather haughty distinction of his manner, his ancient family and great wealth, secured for him a welcome everywhere. To see him in the midst of the Parisian fetes, no one would have recognized in him the terrible and vindictive assassin of poor Lakhmi. He himself had at last succeeded in banishing the remembrance of the horrible night which had witnessed the accomplishment of his double vengeance. Slaves! It was foolish of him to waste a thought on them! It is true, Lakhmi had been his first love, and first love, even though no incident underlies it, always leaves traces never to be effaced in the heart. It is on the hardest marble that his penetrating arrow traces this divine sentence, a whole poem in itself, "I

love," and nothing, neither time nor space can make the traces disappear.

Since this violent and unfortunate passion which had led him to the commission of a horrible crime, Sanchez had had numerous intrigues. His success with other women had obliterated the memory of Lakhmi's disdain, but not one of them had succeeded in making that secret fibre in his heart vibrate, as the young slave had done.

Paris is the city of marvels. All aristocracies vie with each other in displaying their wealth and splendor. Sanchez was enchanted. He could not struggle against the many seductions he encountered at each step.

Among all the charming young girls, flowers of the civilization of Europe, more womanly than Eve in heart, more beautiful than Venus in form, more gracious than the Willis, uniting every attraction to every charm, the one who appealed most to his heart and imagination, was Clotilde Schunberg.

When Isaac presented him to his daughter, Sanchez was dazzled at the first instant. Clotilde was simply dressed, although in perfect taste, but her fresh young beauty needed nothing to show off its brightness. As to the first impression produced

on Clotilde by Sanchez, it was favorable, but that was all.

"My daughter," Schunberg had said when Clotilde entered the room; then turning to her: "Monsieur le Marquis d'Aviella," he added, designating Sanchez.

The marquis bowed respectfully. Clotilde returned his salute with exquisite grace, full of reserve but yet cordially.

Parisian women alone understand the secret of how to welcome, where a smile means everything, and Clotilde was a Parisian to the tips of her fingers. Sanchez gazed at her, surprised and charmed beyond description.

"I can promise you a new partner in Monsieur le Marquis, my dear," continued Schunberg, "for he has just told me that he wishes to enter our Parisian circles, and this evening I am going to present him to your god-mother."

"Ah! Monsieur Schunberg, you ought not to alarm mademoiselle," said Sanchez. "If I am a competent judge, a new arrival among her crowd of admirers, must only prove an additional embarrassment to her."

"You doubt our hospitality then, Monsieur le Marquis?" replied Clotilde. "Any compatriot introduced

by my father would be welcomed by me; how much more so a stranger? I will write your name down for Madame de Lunèville's ball, and you shall have the first waltz."

"I accept gratefully, mademoiselle, but I ought to warn you that I am a very wretched dancer."

"Such a confession is due to your modesty, I am sure; in any case, I promise to be indulgent."

"I will do my best not to take too much advantage of this generous sentiment, mademoiselle."

"Then that is decided," interrupted Schunberg. "Clotilde, I prophecy, will find in you a partner worthy of her."

"Father."

"Don't pretend to be so very modest! That would be trouble thrown away."

"I will venture to say," interrupted the marquis, "that mademoiselle in dancing, as in beauty, will not find her equal in any Paris drawing-room."

The compliment was rather plain spoken, but Schunberg was too sincere an admirer of his daughter to feel offended and Clotilde alone was visibly embarrassed. Sanchez hastened to repair his error.

"Excuse me," he said, "I am conducting myself like a savage. I had no right to speak as I thought,

but if sincerity can palliate my offense, I merit forgiveness."

"That is what I call a very fine young man," said Schunberg after Sanchez had left; "don't you agree with me, Clotilde?"

"He is very agreeable, father," she replied unaffectedly.

It was on account of what took place at this interview that George de Maurange had been obliged to yield his place to Sanchez. From that moment a secret jealousy existed between the two men.

During the next few weeks, the rivals found a hundred additional motives to add to their mutual hatred.

Sanchez was deeply in love with Clotilde; he did not conceal his feelings from her, without, however, declaring himself in so many words.

The girl was a thorough woman of the world and this, in addition to her fascination, beauty and grace completely conquered the young marquis.

He confessed all to his mother, and the marchioness, although she saw with regret, her son aspire to a woman without title, was won also by Clotilde's many attractions, and ended by approving completely of her son's choice.

"Would you like me to speak to Monsieur Schunberg?" she asked more than a hundred times.

"No, not yet, mother, not yet; I am not sure she loves me."

"And why should you doubt it, my son?"

"Never mind, mother, wait a little yet, I beg of you."

In de Maurange's case, the unmistakable attentions of the marquis threatened to demolish all his plans for the future. The triumph of his rival would be his ruin; more even; poverty, perhaps even suicide. Not by any means so much in love as Sanchez, he was better able to judge of the daily progress his rival made in Clotilde's affections.

Unknown to herself, the young Portuguese occupied her thoughts more and more each day, and drew her away from George. She found in him a singular attraction which the other did not possess. The marquis' looks spoke more eloquently. Sanchez's black eyes had more fire in them than George's blue ones. But the more desirous the latter seemed to bring things to a crisis, the more determined Clotilde was to profit by the delay accorded by her father.

She experienced the delight of a novice in the

world and its pleasures. The admiration of her numerous train of admirers pleased her exceedingly. It was a sort of innocent, unrestrained coquettishness, a virgin fancy, the caprice of a child to her.

De Maurange and the marquis were equal favorites with her.

"When I love either one or the other," she said to herself, "I will think of him alone."

And she was waiting until she should love Sanchez; for if de Maurange was her ideal of the distinguished courteous husband she had dreamed of d'Aviella, whose fanciful, headstrong disposition, appealed more directly to the romantic side of her character.

George, although superior to all the others in Clotilde's eyes, still bore some resemblance to them, while Sanchez was unlike any one. His impulses, even the most passionate, displayed great simplicity, while on the contrary, everything in his rival betrayed the calculating diplomat.

When the marquis put his arm round Clotilde's waist to mingle with the waltzers, she could not deny the power he possessed over her. He was silent, but his eyes flashed lightning; his hand held in an almost convulsive clasp, the slender fingers of the young girl; she felt he loved her.

This eloquent silence spoke more to her heart than all the cleverly constructed compliments of George. Clotilde would fain have melted the iciness of the one and moderated the ardor of the other, for if George's coolness irritated her, the fiery nature she had divined in Sanchez, had inspired her with terror.

The most insignificant details betrayed the secret thoughts of the rivals.

For example, the marquis hardly ever invited her for any dance but the waltz; George on the contrary preferred the quadrille, which enabled him to display all the resources of his wit.

Sanchez did not perceive this difference at first, but one evening, when de Maurange was dancing a quadrille with Clotilde, the marquis' jealousy was aroused, as formerly, it had been by Dominique.

"How cruel you are?" George, protected by the noise of the orchestra, was saying to Clotilde, "and what sort of heart can you have to trifle with the profound love you have inspired in me! I endure tortures and dare not even complain, since my suffering is caused by you."

"What a melancholy preamble!" said Clotilde smiling.

"Ah! do not laugh at me. I see how things are.

But I implore you to have pity on me, and not dance so frequently with the Marquis d'Aviella!"

"But it seems to me I do not dance with him more than with you."

"Am I then only one of a crowd, that you can answer me like that?"

"The marquis is my father's friend."

"He loves you."

"Monsieur de Maurange!"

"Pardon my frankness, mademoiselle, but he does love you."

"You are better informed than I am, it seems?"

"I am too jealous of him to make any mistake."

"Well! I suppose you are right! Can I prevent the marquis from liking me?"

"You ought to."

"It seems to me you are inclined to be selfish."

"I was not thinking of myself."

"And may I ask of whom then?"

"Of you."

"I do not understand you. Please explain. I do not like enigmas."

"The marquis is my rival; like me, he aspires to your hand. Consider well before you give him the preference."

"Ah! take care; one word more and you will

calumniate him. I warn you, that I will no more permit you to speak against him to me, than I would Monsieur d'Aviella, if he attempted, by any chance, to poison my mind against you."

"What you designate calumny, is only the truth, I give you my word of honor; and it concerns your own happiness more than mine. I know men, and I have my own opinion about the marquis. Under an attractive exterior, he hides, be assured of it, a lava capable of annihilating any obstacle standing between him and the gratification of his passion. The love, as well as the hate of such natures is terrible. If I were a woman, I would be afraid to belong to the Marquis d'Aviella. There is only a vague suspicion of the mutual antipathy existing between him and me, and if he could have killed me with a look, he would have done so twenty times already; I read it in his eyes. For you, for you, above all, this terrible love is to be dreaded."

These words, pronounced with great earnestness, plunged the banker's daughter into deep thought.

The quadrille had ended some minutes already, and yet she remained motionless, as if still listening to the words of her partner. Dark doubts were entering her mind. What George had just said

coincided with her own secret fears, vague until then, but which now began to take definite shape.

Recalled to herself by the prolonged silence of the orchestra:

"Own that you have simply exercised a little diplomacy in trying to frighten me?" she said.

De Maurange replied only by an almost imperceptible sign. Clotilde turned and beheld at about two steps from her, the marquis, pale as a specter, who advanced to her with a smile on his lips.

"Will you be kind enough, mademoiselle," said he to her, "to give me a quadrille?"

"Impossible, Monsieur le Marquis, I have promised them all."

"Is your partner among the privileged number?" demanded Sanchez indicating George.

"Yes."

"In that case, it is not to you, but to him, I must address myself. Will you have the goodness to grant the quadrille I am soliciting, Monsieur de Maurange?"

"No, Monsieur le Marquis."

"You are not particularly obliging."

"Pardon me; I have already been forced to make a sacrifice of the same nature for you, and it cost me so much, that of my own free will I have no desire to go through a similar experience."

"That is only just," said Sanchez coldly.

"You are not reasonable, Monsieur le Marquis," said Clotilde, "your name is on my card for two waltzes this evening; what more can you desire?"

"Very well then!" said Sanchez. "Since it is impossible this evening, deign, at least, to put down my name for a quadrille at the minister's ball."

"Willingly."

"A thousand thanks!"

Clotilde took her tablets and inscribed Sanchez's name; then conducted back to her place by George, she was claimed by another partner for a polka.

Some moments later the marquis joined George, who was standing alone in a little boudoir.

"I forbid you to dance any more with Mademoiselle Schunberg," said Sanchez without any preamble.

"Your weapons!" answered de Maurange tranquilly, in a calm low voice.

"You understand me then?"

"Perfectly, as you see. Your weapons?"

"Pistols, at three paces. One alone loaded; within an hour!"

"Oh! oh! Monsieur le Marquis, you are going too quickly!"

"You refuse?"

"Yes and no. We are not in Brazil. I am quite ready to give you the satisfaction of trying to kill me, and to offer me the agreeable pleasure with regard to yourself, since by the laws of love and jealousy, one of us is one too many near Mademoiselle Schunberg, but I have had eight years at the fencing school, four as an assiduous attendant at the shooting gallery, and I do not want to sacrifice these little advantages. I will willingly fight you with the pistol, if such is your good pleasure, but according to the accepted rules."

"I cannot understand how a brave man can quarrel with the conditions of a combat whatever they may be."

"Permit me, my dear sir, hatred, of all passions, is the one most likely to mislead us, and you seem to be very much under its influence. To such a degree, that you have neglected other precautions that delicacy of feeling imposes on us. One thing is necessary, if we are to meet."

Sanchez made a movement of impatience.

"Oh! keep your mind tranquil," continued George, "we will fight; but first, I repeat, no one must suspect the true cause of our duel, for I understand that in Brazil, as elsewhere, it is not

customary to act lightly where a woman's name is concerned. That we are to fight because we both love the same girl, is all very well between ourselves, but the time is past when two rivals can enter the lists carrying the colors of their lady loves, and we must keep the true reason of our encounter to ourselves."

"You are right; and what then —"

"What then, sir! Why it is very simple; in order that the true reason remains unknown, even from our seconds, we must find an apparent one; or whatever our respective imaginations suggest to us. Never can such a cannibal style of combat as you suggested a moment ago be justifiable. The question of mere courage has nothing to do with my refusal; for, in order to impose such terrible and unheard of condition on our seconds, it would be necessary to prove that the nature of the insult to be wiped away was such as to imperiously exact the death of one of us, and our habits and manners only admit of such extreme measures when our honor is called into question, not only directly, but when injury has been done to some woman nearly related to one. Mademoiselle de Schunberg is not my relation; I have neither mother nor sister."

"But I have a mother!" said Sanchez blind to every feeling but his jealousy.

"But, Monsieur le Marquis, she has white hair!"

And George forced Sanchez to lower his eyes in spite of himself.

He continued:

"We must find some other pretext for meeting, and fight seriously as becomes gentlemen who do not fight like charlatans, or for the sake of notoriety, and that is what I have to propose to you."

"How can it be done?"

"Meet me in an hour at the club. I will be there and shall accost you in a friendly manner so that no one will be able to suspect our real purpose. We will take our places at the card table, and there seize the first opportunity which occurs."

"At play?"

"Yes, is it not one of the great criterions of honor among men?"

"Yes, and I accept. In an hour."

"I will wait for you."

"I shall not keep you waiting."

De Maurange re-entered the ball-room. Isaac and his daughter were just leaving, while the banker was taking leave of the Baroness de Lunèville, George drew near to Clotilde, and said to

her as he bowed his adieux, in such a manner that no one else could hear:

"Very soon, I shall furnish you with reliable information regarding the Marquis Sanchez d'Aviella."

He then disappeared, gained the cloak room, and immediately left for the club.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INSULT.

While driving to the club, George, with that imperturbable calm which he had always been able to preserve under the most trying circumstances, traced out for himself a plan of conduct which he determined not to depart from whatever events might come to pass.

When de Maurange entered, in spite of the advanced hour, several tables of 'ecarte' and bouillote were in full swing. The great "perhaps," of Musset, liable to spring forth from each spotted card, appealed with a dumb eloquence to the imagination of the players.

A few members of the club, talking and smoking, lolling on the cushioned seats near the fireplace, formed a calm contrast to the agitation of the rest of the room. Of the number of these last were Gaston d'Arthèville, one of Madame de Lunèville's guests, who had just arrived; Durouget, whose name has already been mentioned in this recital,

then Monsieur de Chambly, an old beau, keeping up a hard fight against the encroachments of corpulency and baldness, gout and the advance of age.

"Ah! here is de Maurange," said Gaston, "you have followed my example and left the ball, my dear fellow. It was splendid, but one can have too much even of the best of things."

Two o'clock struck. Sanchez entered.

For some moments George's eyes had wandered alternately from the door to the time-piece and then from the time-piece to the door.

"Oh! so you have come, my rival," he said to himself when the marquis had made his appearance. "I am ready."

After bowing to d'Arthéville and Durouget, Sanchez advanced to de Maurange and said to him in a calm voice, but loud enough for those near him to hear:

"Good evening again, Monsieur de Maurange!"

"Good evening, marquis!" answered George cordially holding out his hand to the other.

Sanchez made an effort, and touched it with the tips of his fingers.

"The savage is calmer," reflected George after a short examination; "but I know him, and the least spark will cause him to explode like a barrel of gunpowder."

Sanchez in fact was calmer, and this is the reason why:

After his rival's departure from the ball, he also came up to Clotilde, who notwithstanding Monsieur de Maurange's last words, gave him a most gracious welcome. Mademoiselle Schunberg's feelings had undergone a complete change in favor of the marquis, and she felt under an obligation to make up to him by a little extra kindness, for the moment when she had been led to indulge in a feeling bordering on antipathy, which nothing she actually knew could justify. George's adieu only helped to exaggerate her feelings. More in sympathy with Sanchez than de Maurange, she put a very unfavorable impression on the latter's promise, and desiring to see the young Portuguese come honorably out of this secret trial, she gave him more encouragement than she had ever done before.

"I am very angry with you," she said to the marquis with a gracious smile which completely contradicted her words.

"May I know the cause of your awful wrath?" said Sanchez recovering his usual sang froid in the sunshine of Clotilde's smile.

"Undoubtedly. A short time ago, when you asked for a quadrille at the minister's ball, you

wore a sinister air, for which I demand an explanation."

The question came suddenly. Sanchez was at a loss how to answer it. His was a singular nature, a crater inside, sensitive on the surface.

"What sinister air do you allude to?"

"Oh! don't attempt any denial, Monsieur le Marquis; I know you well enough to read even your most secret thoughts."

The occasion was a perfect one; the young man did not allow it to escape.

"Then," said he, "you ought to know for a long time past why I cannot see you with another man's arm round your waist, and not suffer keenly."

He had never gone so far. Clotilde in her turn was embarrassed.

"I love you," said Sanchez in a very low voice and in such a thrilling tone, that the avowal admitted of no doubt.

"Ah!" answered Clotilde blushing, "I shall not question you any more; you answer more than I asked."

"Does my confession displease you?—Have pity and do not condemn me. If you only knew—"

"You ask too much—"

"I implore, you mean to say. Is that not the

word to employ when one asks for happiness?"

"I will give you my answer at the Minister's ball."

"Have I offended you? Do not leave me to think so."

"No, since I have given you your quadrille, and that I mean to keep that engagement."

Sanchez went away transported.

For the moment he had even forgotten George. Yet he soon remembered his appointment and with the recovery of his memory, his hatred returned with renewed force, in a less excited degree, but with equal tenacity. He had faith in Clotilde's preference for him; but although now almost certain of winning her, he reflected that his triumph would not prevent de Maurange from loving the same woman he did, and his jealousy made him regard this love as a deadly outrage which called for vengeance.

Such were the state of his feelings when George held out his hand to him.

Circumstances soon tended to aid the plans of the two rivals. After a few moments of desultory conversation, kept up principally by Durouget and d'Athéville, the latter proposed a game of baccarat.

De Chambly, Durouget, the marquis and two or

three other members of the club agreed with pleasure. They seated themselves round the table. Sanchez faced George, d'Athéville occupied the seat on his right, and Durouget on his left.

Placed on George's right, his friend de Chambly waited patiently for a hand which would enable him, he said in his foppish manner, to present a coupé to a chirographical celebrity of the period whom he dishonored with his confidence.

His vain efforts amused the players.

"I very much fear that the coupé you speak of, will never roll so quickly as your louis do this evening, my dear de Chambly," said Durouget.

De Chambly retorted by a borco which proved as unfortunate as the preceeding ones.

George and Sanchez both observed a calm exterior. D'Aviella was on the lookout for the slightest pretext to pick a quarrel; de Maurange did not disturb himself, resolved to wait patiently for the occasion which was sure to come. He had determined that the blame should lie with his rival, reserving for himself the more dignified role which would tell in his favor afterwards.

By a singular caprice of luck, the occasion so desired by Sanchez did not present itself. The game proceeded in the orthodox manner; only,

each time that the cards came round to the two rivals, they only looked at them, without making a single offer, and consequently, had no opportunity for dispute. Then, some serious insult was necessary. "Play is one of the criterions of honor," George had said, and the marquis wished to attack de Maurange's very honor, so that no amicable arrangement could be possible. The delay irritated Sanchez. At last de Maurange received a hand and decided to play.

There was only five louis remaining of the note for a thousand francs which he had placed on the table when he joined the players.

"Five louis!" he said placing the amount on his cards.

"I see them," said Sanchez.

De Chambly got the better of him and forced him to withdraw. George won. Sanchez armed himself with patience. He felt that it would be better to wait until the amount produced by the successive winnings of his rival, was of some importance. At the end of five *coups* it amounted to two thousand francs.

The lookers on began to get excited.

"Banco!" said Sanchez throwing two bank notes before George.



"YOU ARE ALL WITNESSES THAT MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS HAS SERIOUSLY INSULTED ME."
P. 1.

"Eight!" said George throwing down a pair royal. "There are four thousand francs."

"Banco!" repeated the marquis.

The cards again favored de Maurange.

"Eight thousand francs, gentlemen!"

"Banco!" said the marquis a third time, emptying his pocket book.

George again won. Sanchez, irritated by his adversary's success, thought at one moment of forcing a quarrel then, but, on reflection, he contented himself with glaring across at George with a look of hatred which showed the other the degree of irritation the Portuguese had arrived at. Without appearing to notice, de Maurange continued calmly, to deal the cards.

"You have won, sir," said he, a few moments later, pushing over to d'Aviella, the heap of gold and notes lying before him.

"Can he be afraid," said Sanchez to himself, "we shall see."

George soon enlightened him.

"Did you remark how many pretty women were at the hotel de Lunèville this evening, d'Athèville?" said he, lighting a cigar.

"My dear fellow! It is too great a pleasure for me to risk losing."

"And to whom, my dear Paris, would you have offered the apple?"

"The Countess de Rieux."

"Oh! a brunette!"

"She is, however, very beautiful."

"You are right, but I admire dark women, as little as I do fair men."

M. de Chambly winced. In 1845 he had been fair.

"Ah! you like fair women, de Maurange?" he said.

"Yes, my dear friend, like Eve, Venus and Marguerite, the three sublime sinners of faith, paganism and romance. What is your opinion, marquis?"

Sanchez could hardly restrain himself.

"Play, play first, marquis; you can answer presently."

The marquis obeyed, and passed three times.

De Maurange did not punt.

Annoyed at this:

"You are not playing, Monsieur de Maurange?"

"I beg your pardon, I am only waiting."

"What for?"

"Until the stake is worth playing for."

Sanchez very soon had six thousand francs before him.

"I stake a thousand francs," said de Chambly pushing the sum forward.

"Well, Monsieur de Maurange?" said the marquis.

"Banco! On my word!"

"Under those circumstances, I pass the hand," said Sanchez laying down his cards.

All the players sprung up.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," said de Maurange looking very pale; "you are all witnesses that Monsieur le Marquis has seriously insulted me. I think you can affirm that his conduct is altogether unjustifiable."

"Yes, yes," several voices answered.

"In Brazil we only play with money on the table," explained Sanchez.

"Possibly, sir," replied George, "but we do not happen to be in Brazil now. I beg you to observe that having covered Monsieur de Chambly's stake, the rules of the play interdict you from withdrawing. De Chambly, will you kindly lend me sixty thousand francs."

"Here they are," said the old beau.

"Banco!" repeated de Maurange, placing the sum before him.

The marquis dealt the cards.

Eight fell from George.

"Thanks, de Chambly, allow me to pay my debt. As for you, Monsieur le Marquis, I shall have the honor of sending you my seconds to-morrow."

No one ventured any remark at these words. They left the table. De Maurange took de Chambly aside. While he was speaking to him, d'Aviella begged d'Artheville and Durouget to oblige him by being his seconds. George left the club some moments later, and in the best possible spirits jumped into a cab, and indulged in the following soliloquy:

"Bravo! Monsieur le Marquis! You have helped me to make the first step; if Charles only succeeds on his side, the fascinating heiress, known as Clotilde Schunberg, shall be mine!"

CHAPTER V.

THE MARQUIS' SECRET.

On arriving home, de Maurange, without taking the trouble to undress, threw himself on a lounge, and soon fell into a sound sleep. It was then five o'clock in the morning. Six hours afterward the door opened and Charles, George's valet, entered the room.

His master awoke.

"What o'clock is it?"

"Eleven o'clock, sir."

"Already!" said George stretching himself. "The devil! I was in the middle of a dream to make one wish to sleep on forever. Have you done what I told you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And have you succeeded?"

"Yes, sir, and beyond our hopes."

"Tell me all about it."

"Yesterday evening, I saw Charlotte, Mademoiselle Schunberg's maid, and as skilfully as possible, got what information I could out of her about the

governess. Madame Firmin is fond of money."

"And is she devoted?"

"To whoever pays her well."

"What is her salary at Monsieur Schunberg's?"

"Three thousand francs."

"That's handsome. Well, and what else?"

"I saw the negro this morning and made him tipsy with some Old Normandy Brandy, the strength of which he never suspected, and he relished it so much that he began to talk."

"Were you in livery?"

"Oh! no, sir. I bought a suit expressly at the Pont-Neuf, and the negro thought I was a veterinary surgeon."

The following fragment of conversation, which had taken place in a back room of a wine merchant's in the neighborhood of the d'Aviella residence between the negro Manoel, who, as well as Gomez, had followed Sanchez and his mother to France, and Charles, George's valet, will explain the importance of this conversation, became confidential in consequence of numerous glasses that Manoel had accepted.

"Tell me, do you know Monsieur le Marquis well?"

"Very well, indeed."

"Between ourselves, what sort of man is he? Is he fond of cards?"

"No."

"Does he drink?"

"Never anything stronger than wine and water."

"Dissipated?"

"I never knew him to have more than one mistress at a time."

"The devil! he is a regular phoenix, it appears to me! Have you never discovered him in a fault?"

"Oh! yes."

"How was that?"

"Ah! that is his secret."

"And yours, it seems. Keep it, I understand your prudence; but without knowing more about him, it is impossible to point out to you how to take advantage of him. You see, I am perfectly frank; I have confidence in you, and really, you do wrong to distrust me."

"I don't distrust you, Monsieur Charles."

"Well, don't let us say any more about it. Your glass!"

Manoel became taciturn, Charles turned the cork of the bottle round and round between his fingers, in an absent manner, but yet keeping a vigilant watch on his companion.

"You are offended with me?" said Manoel, after a few moments silence,

"I? not the least in the world. I am only sorry for your own sake that you cannot tell me everything."

"I should like to, but there are some secrets too terrible to whisper even to your own shadow."

"Oh! you will speak," thought Charles. Then aloud he added: "At Brazil, it is possible, but here, in Paris, an important secret ought to bring money to the man who possesses it. Without telling me everything, answer only a few questions:

"Is the marquis hot tempered?"

"No."

"Jealous?"

"Monsieur Charles!"

"Vindictive?"

"I will not tell anything. If the master found it out, he would kill me."

"Frightened, are you? You can no more kill a black here in Europe with impunity than you can a white."

"I cannot, I tell you!"

"It is very serious then?"

"Yes."

"Jealous and vindictive!" repeated Charles. Then guided by some secret impulse, "he has killed some one?" he hazarded in a low tone,

"Hold your tongue!" gasped Manoel in terror.

"I have guessed the truth then?"

"No."

"Your terror would lead me to suppose the contrary."

"You will not repeat it, at least," said the black with a supplicating look.

"You need not be afraid; empty your glass. There now, you feel better, don't you?—Was it a man?"

"You will be my ruin, Monsieur Charles!"

"Come along, it was a man, then?"

"No."

"At Brazil, a mistress?"

"A—slave—"

"Her name?"

"Her name! Ah! her name! I—I don't know anything more," said Manoel, whom the last libation had totally overcome.

"Try to remember."

"My memory. I am forty years old."

"Don't be so restless. Oh! the wretch, he is dead drunk."

"Dead, did you say. She is quite dead."

"Who?"

"It happened six years ago, at Pernambouc—I am thirsty."

"You will have something to drink presently.

Her name?"

"I must drink."

"Tell me her name, and I will get you a drink."

"Quite sure?"

"Yes. Her name?"

"Lakhmi!"

"Lakhmi," repeated Charles as if to impress the name on his memory.

Then, while the black, completely intoxicated suddenly fell into a deep sleep on the table, he hastened to return to his master, saying to himself:

"After what I have discovered, if monsieur does not show generosity as well as satisfaction, I will have no luck."

CHAPTER VI.

A SINGULAR BARGAIN.

De Maurange listened to Charles with great attention, gave him fifty louis, much to the delight of the valet, and having sent him away, lighted a cigarette, threw himself again on the lounge and began to think deeply.

The discovery he had just made surpassed all that his strong antipathy to Sanchez could ever have led him to hope.

"Come," said he, "my prospects are brightening and I will lay odds on the success of my excellent friend George de Maurange. This Brazilian marquis is not only a wolf, as I suspected, he is a tiger! And I am to allow this adorably fair enchantress, this fascinating Clotilde, so beautiful and wealthy, to unite her existence with this ferocious Brazilian! No, most distinctly, no! But first, let me be prepared for all emergencies."

He got up, took down a buttoned foil, and practiced against the wall for several minutes.

"The legs are good, the arm supple! Let me see if the eye and hand are equally reliable."

He threw his foil down, opened a case of pistols, and took out one of the weapons. Then, walking back to the couch, he removed a small plaque attached to the wall, and fastened a small card to it. Then placing himself at the furthest end of the room he fired, and four times successively removed a corner of the card. At the last shot, a voice called out:

"Bravo! my dear fellow, that is excellent!"

It was de Chambly who had just entered.

"I got up expressly on your account," added the old beau.

"A thousand thanks. You know that the marquis expects you at two o'clock?"

"Perfectly, we will be punctual, for here is our other second."

One of the club members who had taken part in the game of baccarat on the preceding night, now entered the room.

"Thanks for being so exact, gentlemen," said George. "You were both witnesses of Monsieur d'Aviella's insult, and can easily understand that no apology can be accepted. There must be no yielding on this point, if you please. That being

decided, these are my wishes. Having been the person to receive the insult, the choice of weapons lies with me, and I choose pistols; as to any other conditions, I place myself entirely in your hands."

De Chambly attempted to propose some conciliatory arrangement.

"I intend to fight," said de Maurange; "my honor demands it and I shall be satisfied with nothing less."

"With the pistol?"

"Have I not the right to choose?"

"Yes, but look here," showing the other second the card which had just served as a target for George, "just look what a crack shot the fellow is? The marquis is a dead man."

"My dear de Chambly, I am not so invincible as you seem to imagine, and besides, skill in the use of the pistol may serve equally well to spare an adversary as to wound him mortally."

"I hope it may be so; and all for a wretched game of baccarat, where I lost six thousand francs."

"There is no reason why any one should be killed, is there?"

"Not any."

"The marquis is waiting for you. Please go to him, gentlemen," said de Maurange. "I will await

you here. Arrange so that the affair takes place to-day, if you please."

"You can depend on us."

With this promise, the two seconds drove off to the rue l'Université."

Sanchez was waiting for them in his smoking room.

Unlike de Maurange, he had not slept all night; and less calm than he, had given way to the natural irascibility of his violent temper.

At eleven o'clock he had sent Gomez to beg Durouget and d'Arthéville to come to him at two o'clock precisely, so that the duel might take place as soon as possible. His feverish impatience betrayed itself in the most trifling details. He had told Gomez everything, and these were the words with which he had welcomed the old hunter when the latter came to his bidding.

"I am going to fight a duel to-day, with a man whom I must kill, Gomez."

"You have been insulted, Monsieur le Marquis! who has dared to do so?"

"A fool of whom I shall soon make a corpse."

"What weapons are you going to use?"

"I don't know yet; but let me have him at the end of my sword or pistol, and I promise you, I shall have his life."

"I am quite aware of Monsieur le Marquis' skill, but may I be permitted to make an observation?"

"Speak."

"You look very much irritated, and anger, by hurrying your thrusts, may render them less sure, and by agitating your arm, make your aim uncertain."

"Have you then forgotten how I lodged a ball in a jaguar's eye, as he bounded in the moonlight at fifty steps distance?"

"Yes, but you were calm then."

"Not always," murmured Sanchez replying to a secret thought, a sinister gleam of the past, which shot across his mind like a sombre flame, and raising his head as if to shake off this fatal memory, he took Gomez's hand, as he added: "I will be calm, I promise you."

At that moment Durouget and d'Arthéville arrived.

Exactly as George had done, the marquis gave free permission to his seconds, only declaring that he would offer no apology, so that the duel was inevitable.

D'Arthéville and Durouget withdrew to a small salon adjoining the smoking-room, when they heard George's seconds announced.

The latter entered.

In few words they made the marquis acquainted with de Maurange's intentions.

"I am obliged to you, gentlemen, for not trying to prevent this duel. My seconds are there. Be kind enough to join them, so that you may be able to conclude all necessary arrangements."

The two men bowed and withdrew into the adjoining salon.

While this was taking place at the hotel d'Aviella, de Maurange was taking a very cool, clear sighted view of his present position.

"If I kill this devil of a marquis," he soliloquized, "my hopes of a marriage with Clotilde will be endangered, that is certain. In spite of the apparent pretext for this encounter, she is too clever not to guess the true motive. I have studied her character. Under a somewhat frivolous manner, she is very tender hearted, and would have considerable difficulty in pardoning my victory. Besides, without being positively loved by her, this Sanchez—why did he not stay at Brazil and kill Lakhmis at his ease—occupies already too great a portion of her thoughts for the lovely Clotilde not to conceive an everlasting enmity against me if I avenge the murdered slave. On the other hand, if I only

wound him, our duel will not make much talk; Mademoiselle Schunberg may even remain in ignorance of it, interpreting the momentary absence of my rival from attendance on her as a definitive retreat. During this time, I will have the field free, and can hasten events in such a way that I shall have nothing more to dread from d'Aviella when he does appear. What is of the first importance is to continue to play a becoming role. One never knows what may happen, and women are never completely insensible to anything that savors of chivalry. There are two possibilities to foresee; whether he kills or wounds me. In the first case, the future matters very little; in the second, it is as brilliant for me as if I came out victorious from this encounter, thanks to the secret I discovered this morning; for its revelation will certainly compel Clotilde to await my recovery, whatever may happen. I have nothing to dread then but death, and really, I do not dread that."

He had gone thus far in his reflections, when the door opened, and to his great astonishment a veiled woman entered. He mechanically rose to his feet, and in a second became convinced that this woman was entirely unknown to him.

"I have the pleasure of speaking to Monsieur

George de Maurange?" she said in a slightly foreign accent, without appearing to notice the profound astonishment depicted on the young man's countenance.

"Yes, madame; but how does it happen—"

"That I intrude on you without being announced? You will soon know, monsieur."

And without waiting for George to offer her a chair, she seated herself and raised her veil.

De Maurange had an opportunity of examining her at his leisure for a short moment. The stranger, who seemed about twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, was very beautiful. Her dress, although altogether devoid of show, bore every evidence of wealth.

George's surprise was beyond bounds.

"You are going to fight a duel with the Marquis d'Aviella?" she continued.

De Maurange made a movement as if to protest.

"Oh! do not deny it, monsieur, and do not ask me how I happened to arrive at this knowledge. Money will make the dead speak, and I am rich enough to buy any secrets I have use for."

This unceremonious introduction, offered with a calm assurance which admitted of no doubt, redoubled the astonishment of the listener. Who

could have revealed even for gold, the fact of his duel to this young woman?

George could not suspect his seconds, and Charles knew nothing.

"My reason for coming to your rooms, is that I wished to see you before this duel. I bribed your people to let me come in without being announced, for fear, at such a time, that you would not consent to receive me, not having the honor of being acquainted with me."

This lofty tone was displeasing to George.

"Pardon me, madame," said he, interrupting his unknown visitor, "but allow me to observe that before having this honor, I will not consent to listen to you any longer."

"Of what importance can my name be to you? You have never heard it pronounced. Besides, to be frank, I shall not give it to you to-day, and I will convince you that to exact such a thing would be puerile, when I could easily gratify your curiosity by inventing any name on the spot."

"You are right," acknowledged the young man.

"Then do not let us waste time in mere words, monsieur, and please give me your undivided attention."

"I promise to do so."

"Thanks. You are supposed to be wealthy, yet you are a poor man."

"Madame!—"

"You promised to listen, monsieur; for the future, do not deny anything, it would be useless trouble. I know all about your life for the past ten years, as well as if I had never left you during that time for one minute."

"And what end could you have possibly had in view when you permitted yourself to pry into my past history?" said George haughtily.

"You will know very soon, allow me to continue."

"Very well then," said de Maurange, impressed in spite of himself by his mysterious guest.

"You like money, and your duel is more a question of money than anything else."

"Pardon me, madame, but—"

"Pardon me, monsieur, in my turn; only permit me to remind you that if you do not allow me to continue, we shall never come to any understanding."

"Please go on, madame."

"The marquis is your rival, and the banker Isaac Schunberg's fortune adds tenfold, in your eyes, to his daughter Clotilde's beauty, whom you imagine yourself to be in love with."

"What demon can have read my inmost thoughts and revealed them so clearly to you?" cried de Maurange.

"Not any, reassure yourself. There are more suppositions than actual facts in what I have said. I pay well and I am served well. I judge you according to your actions, that is all."

George felt helpless before a will stronger than his own. He was silent and listened.

"I should like, though, to enlighten you a little," pursued the young woman. "If I did take the trouble to occupy myself with your every action, and your most careless speeches, I ought to confess to you that I did so because chance has brought you and the Marquis d'Aviella together."

"Ah! you love the marquis?"

"No, oh no! I swear it!"

And the denial was accompanied by a look so full of hate, that George was startled.

"I do not like the marquis," pursued the stranger, "and yet presuming that your most ardent desire is to kill him, I have come here for the express purpose of buying his life."

"From me?" cried de Maurange stupefied before this living enigma that was speaking to him.

"Yes, I know you to be an unerring marksman,

as well as a first class swordsman. The marquis' life is in your hands, and I wish him to live."

"You see, madame, my suspicions were correct. You love the marquis."

"Monsieur de Maurange, I never tell falsehoods."

"If it is not love, it cannot be hate which guides your conduct."

"Perhaps—Look; here are a hundred thousand francs, swear to me that you will not kill the marquis, and it belongs to you," said the stranger, holding out to George a well filled packet.

"A hundred thousand francs!"

"Count them."

"Such a bargain."

"Is very reasonable. Should the marquis live, your chances of becoming Monsieur Schunberg's son-in-law are remote; it is then only just that I should offer you some slight equivalent. Promise me, your word will be sufficient."

"Pardon me. By asking me to spare the life of the marquis, you include the sacrifice of my own, you see, I must allow myself to be defeated."

"I only ask for the life of the marquis, and nothing more. You may wound him, seriously even, without breaking our agreement, and the more painful his wound is, the better will I be satisfied;

but I repeat again, what I do wish, is that he should not be killed. Let him suffer, that is exactly what I desire; suffer as much as possible; do you accept?"

"Yes," said de Maurange after an instant's reflection.

"Here is the money. Swear to me, you will not kill the marquis."

"I promise you, on my word of honor, that I will not," said George in a firm voice. "But who then, are you?"

"A woman who lives but for one end, that is all I can tell you now. Until we meet again, adieu, Monsieur de Maurange, and thank you. We were made to understand each other and you will marry Mademoiselle Schunberg, that much I can tell you. Henceforth, you have an ally, and this little hand holds your future between the five fingers."

These last words were pronounced in a more friendly tone, in which also could be discerned complete satisfaction. George took the hand held out to him and kissed it. It was the left hand. He did not pay particular attention to this at the time, but re-conducted his singular visitor to the door of his room. De Chambly and the other second met her as they were coming in. They

could not see her features under the veil in the rather dark hall, but the elegance of her general appearance struck them. George asked them in the salon.

"*Peste*," said the old beau, "here is Venus come to encourage Mars. If I had such a mistress I would fight like a lion."

"Well, gentlemen, what have you to tell me?" demanded de Maurange.

"In an hour, at the barriere de l'Étoile. We decided on pistols, at twenty-five paces; you are to fire together at a given signal."

"Very good," assented George.

Then he rang.

"A carriage," he ordered.

The valet went out to execute the order.

"We are to get pistols at Lepage's, the marquis' seconds will do the same, and when we arrive on the ground, the weapons will be awarded by drawing lots. These are the arrangements we have come to," explained de Chambly.

"They could not be better; I will be with you in a moment."

Leaving his two friends, de Maurange re-entered the room where he had received his strange visitor; he locked up the hundred thousand francs in his

secretaire and placing himself at his writing table, began to write.

"The marquis d'Aviella murdered one of his slaves named Lakhmi. The friend who tells you this secret will soon furnish the proofs."

This short anonymous note finished, George enclosed it in an envelope which he carefully sealed and on which he wrote the following superscription:

"For Mademoiselle Clotilde."

Then he took a fresh sheet of paper and wrote:

"Madame, render an important service to a friend of Mademoiselle Schunberg's, and let her have the enclosed note before evening. I will soon disclose who I am."

Taking a note for 500 francs he enclosed it with both letters in a second envelope, and addressed it to:

"Madame Firmin, hotel Schunberg, Chaussée d'Antim."

And then, having slipped this letter in a third envelope which he sealed like the others, but which he left unaddressed, he rejoined his friends.

"Here, de Chambly," said he, "take this letter. If I am so seriously wounded as to be unconscious, break the seal and forward the one it encloses. Will you do this?"

"On my honor."

"If I am killed, you will burn it without opening it."

"Yes, I understand."

"My best thanks."

Charles entered.

"The carriage is waiting, sir."

"That is right. I am going out for a few hours, shut up everything here during my absence," said de Maurange. Then addressing his seconds: "Come, let us be off, gentlemen! We must not keep Monsieur le Marquis d'Aviella waiting."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPY.

Let us, for a moment, leave the belligerents on their way to the Arcade Triomph de l'Étoile, and look backwards at what had taken place at the Schunberg hotel a few hours before.

The banker's punctuality was proverbial. The least important acts of his life were as regularly marked out as the march of the globe. Every morning at eleven o'clock precisely, never sooner, never later, he entered the dining room where Clotilde waited breakfast for him. She knew this gave her father great pleasure, and the affectionate girl adored him. That morning, the smile which the old man daily wore on presenting himself to Clotilde, vanished from his lips as he entered the room where we first introduced him to the reader. Clotilde was absent.

"How very extraordinary!" Then after waiting for a few minutes: "Can she be ill?"

He was on the point of going to his daughter's

room, when Madame Firmin, Mademoiselle Schunberg's companion, entered the room. She was a woman of middle size, with a flat figure, and a honied smile. Her face was angular, her nose formidable in its proportions, and her eyelids prominent in shape like the shell of a chestnut. Her voice even, in spite of its natural sweetness, had a certain nasal accent, almost imperceptible, but which showed that Madame Firmin was born to be a professional beggar. Disinherited, in the first place, by nature, a veritable stepmother to her, Madame Firmin had also met illtreatment at the hands of fate.

At eighteen years of age, the age when all women, even the least endowed, believe and hope, she had encountered a good looking unprincipled adventurer, who married her, he said for love, but in reality to gain possession of the 50,000 francs which constituted all the wealth of the unattractive young girl. A month later, he ran away with a good looking milliner, leaving only to his angular better half, the consolation of weeping over her loss. Since then, Madame Firmin had never heard either of her runaway or her money.

Having received a brilliant education and possessing some talents, she gave lessons on the piano,

posed as a woman of incorruptible virtue, in the hope, perhaps, of entrapping some Englishman or American who could appreciate a misunderstood and persecuted woman. But the dreamed-of consoler never came. It is true, that like the scarecrows which country people make use of to frighten away sparrows, the unprepossessing appearance of the deserted wife kept at a respectful distance the most intrepid.

One morning the clock of time rang out her fortieth winter. She then extinguished her lantern, became still more reserved and gave all hope of turning into honey the bitterness of her blighted hopes.

Pariah from love and maternity, her withered heart became credulous and soft without hatred, but also without devotion. The ashes under which it lay hidden ended by extinguishing the flame of its latent passion, except the love of gold. In certain crises, Madame Firmin saw yellow, as certain assassins see red, under the sway of their passions.

For six years she had lived with the Schunbergs whose entire confidence she had gained. As for Clotilde, her kind heart had induced her to love her governess from the first day, and adroitly led

by Madame Firmin, she had ended by not having any secrets from her.

"Is my daughter not well?" the banker asked her eagerly.

"She is quite well, monsieur, reassure yourself. Mademoiselle begged me to ask you to excuse her for not being quite ready yet, and to tell you that she would be down presently."

"I will give her a quarter of an hour. Go, madame, and scold her, so that the dear child may make haste."

The cause of Clotilde's nonappearance was as follows:

She respected her father's habits of punctuality, so that, however advanced the hour might be at which she retired for the night, Madame Firmin, on entering her room in the morning always found her young mistress awake; but on the day of which we speak, it was different.

Returning very late from the Baroness de Lunèville's ball, and much agitated at the marquis' avowal, Clotilde had vainly courted sleep. The day broke and she was still awake. George's adieu also kept sounding in her ears, and had a good deal to do with her slightly feverish sleeplessness. Her loyal disposition shrank from any-

thing that sounded like calumny, but what could these warning words of de Maurange signify?

"I shall let you know what sort of man Sanchez really is!"

Did she not know already?

To her great surprise, Madame Firmin, on entering Clotilde's room, had found her asleep. She approached the bed, believing that the young girl was only dozing; but her deep, regular breathing showed that she was in a sound sleep. The governess contented herself with pointing this fact out to Charlotte, the maid, and both retired without awakening the young girl. The breakfast hour approached; this continued sleep made Madame Firmin anxious, and she resolved to awake her.

"Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!" she called, bending over the bedside of the pretty creature, "it is nearly eleven o'clock!"

"So late! Quick, make haste then, Charlotte. Ah! why did you let me sleep? Do not lose a minute," said Mademoiselle Schunberg as she awoke.

The eagerness of the two women, answered to the young girl's wishes, but in spite of all the haste they could make the timepiece struck eleven before she was dressed.

"Too late!" sighed Clotilde. "Oblige me, dear Madame Firmin, by going down and telling my father to grant me a few minutes longer."

The governess was not long in bringing back Schunberg's answer to Clotilde.

"How good he is!" she cried, "he tells you to scold me because he knows it is an impossible thing for you to do. Never mind, you ought to have awakened me."

"You ought to have remained in bed and allowed your father to breakfast alone; you still look tired."

"How can you think of such a thing? No, no, he would have been too anxious. Then I have to speak to him about a matter of importance; for the principal reason of my not sleeping was because I was thinking the best part of the night."

"Seriously?" asked the governess with a smile.

"More so than you think. Madame Firmin, do you like to travel?"

"I do not dislike it"

"Then make haste, and pack up your trunks."

"We are going away?"

"Yes, of course."

"And where?"

"You are asking too much; I do not know myself. At last, I am ready. I will be back presently."

"Yes" to travel in disguise

Isaac welcomed his daughter with his usual affection.

"At last, lazy one!" said he as she entered. "One second more and I would have begun without you. Come and kiss me, as a punishment for making your father wait."

"And you, kiss me again to prove that you forgive me."

"There now, dear child, let us sit down."

He rang and breakfast was served.

When the servants withdrew, as they had orders to do when coffee was served:

"You are very silent to-day, Clotilde?" said the old man. "Oh! don't defend yourself; I know you well enough to divine that your unusual silence only arose from an intense desire to speak a great deal, which the presence of the servants alone prevented. We are alone now, and I am ready to listen."

Clotilde still hesitated.

"Well, what is it?" said Isaac encouragingly.

"I have a big 'yes' to drag from you, father."

"To drag from me? Then there must be good reasons for me to say 'no.' "

"There are, but I know one more powerful than them all put together, which ought to make the balance weigh in favor of 'yes.' "

"And what may this convincing reason be?"

"About five months ago, you granted me a whole year in which to make my choice of a husband. Well, father, I have a son-in-law to propose to you."

"Ah!" said the banker smiling. "And who is the happy mortal?"

"The Marquis d'Aviella, who told me last night he loved me."

"I thought as much. And are you going to be a marchioness soon?"

"I am not quite sure yet. I have still some time left, father."

"How! time!" said Schunberg disappointed.

"Certainly, seven months, at least."

"I do not understand. Why speak of the marquis, in this case?"

"Because my marriage with him depends somewhat on you, and a great deal on Monsieur d'Aviella. I will explain. I have a very friendly feeling towards the marquis, even a deeper feeling perhaps; but while doing justice to his many admirable qualities which I know you appreciate equally with me, I cannot overcome an unconquerable feeling of indecision. I am certain he believes himself sincere, and my hesitation does not arise

from that. But, I should like to put him to a proof, which, while enabling me to read my own heart clearly, will enable me to value at its true worth the real value of the sentiments with which I have inspired him. I have been thinking over this all night and have discovered a means of solving this double problem."

"And the means?"

"Depends on you."

"What are you coming to?"

"To beg you to take a little journey with me."

"And when, my capricious beauty?"

"Immediately."

"What! leave Paris in the middle of winter? And under what snow do you intend to bury yourself?"

"We will fly from it, on the contrary; we shall go to Italy; say you will, won't you?"

"Certainly not."

"What! you refuse me, father?"

"My dear Clotilde, in spite of the sincere pleasure I take in gratifying your slightest wish, my business obliges me to remain in Paris for the moment."

"Oh! I will give you three, or four days."

"Indeed! As much as that?" said Isaac in a mocking tone. "I repeat it, your fine project can-

not be realized; so think of something better."

"Oh! you actually refuse me! this is the first time! that is not kind."

"But for what purpose do you propose taking this journey?"

"I have told you. With the intention of interrogating my own heart and at the same time to put Sanchez, the marquis, I mean," she corrected herself, blushing deeply, "to some proof. Now, this is my plan. You must not tell any one where we are going, neither will I; our friends will not know we have left, until we are already at some distance. Madame Firmin and Andrè, your valet, will alone accompany us. In this way, Monsieur d'Aviella will not be able to join us. We shall remain away three months. If, after this delay, I like him as well as I do now, if absence does not make me forget him, and he still occupies the same place in my heart, I will marry him; if he, on his side, has not forgotten me, and can forgive me for the trial I have put him to, and—"

"But if he really loves you, your departure will drive him to despair. It is a cruel experiment, and may be the means of killing his love," interrupted the banker.

"If he loves me truly, he will suffer, I know; but

do you not think that my lifelong affection does not merit three months of a little suspense? Besides, this departure is necessary. Monsieur d'Aviella made me commit myself last night, and I mean to punish him for it."

"Explain yourself."

"I was surprised and rather agitated when he made his confession, although I half expected it; and I foolishly promised to give him a decided answer at the Minister's ball. On reflection, I do not wish to form a definite engagement so quickly. The only way to escape is not to go to this ball. I beg you then, father, not to refuse me; this ball takes place in five days, and I want to leave Paris before it comes off."

"You are only a spoiled child, Clotilde."

"Very possibly; but be an indulgent father, as you always have been. I am inclined to be superstitious, you know, and I attach a great importance to this trip, for I believe it will have a great influence on my future."

"Very well then, have your own way! We shall go."

"But when?"

"In three days. Durouget can act in my place."

Clotilde, enchanted, loaded the old man with

caresses. It was sufficient recompense for Isaac for the great sacrifice he had made.

Madame Firmin was soon acquainted with the fact that the journey her young mistress had spoken of was definitely arranged; only, when she asked with pardonable curiosity where they were going to, Clotilde replied: "That is a secret," and Madame Firmin did not dare to push her questions further.

A slight feeling of remorse mingled with this extreme reserve.

We shall soon understand why.

Three hours later, that is to say, when she was free, Madame Firmin left the hotel and getting into a cab, ordered the coachman to drive to Neuilly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUEL.

The Bois de Boulogne, at the time we speak of, was very different from the fashionable promenade it is now. The lakes did not exist.

There was no entrance by the avenue de l'Impératrice, that spacious road where pedestrians, riders, and carriages, have each their own place, and only a few of the alleys were frequented. The others, deserted and solitary during winter, were propitious to duels, for the combatants were pretty certain not to encounter any inquisitive loiterers, nor undesirable peacemakers. They fought, hanged themselves, shot their brains out, at their ease, without witnesses, under a leafy canopy peopled by thousands of singing birds during the fine season, and during the winter, with nothing to interrupt their view of the horizon, but the skeleton branches of the trees.

At times, these solitudes were invaded by the appearance of a carriage, wending its way slowly

along the alley known as l'Amour a Cythère. On Sundays, and then only during the fine season, Parisians hungering for the fresh country air, and who had not then the numerous resources offered to them by the suburban railroads, indulged themselves in a holiday, picknicked on the grass, and took their rest on the seventh day, devoutly consecrated to the *dolce far niente*.

By choosing the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile as a place of rendezvous, and consequently the Bois de Boulogne as the place of encounter, the marquis and George's friends acted like men of experience. It was the middle of winter; there was a hard frost, and however short a distance they might penetrate into the unfrequented neighborhood, they were sure to find themselves alone. Choosing weapons at Lapage's had taken more time than de Chambly had calculated on.

When George's carriage arrived at the top of the Champs Élysées, the marquis' carriage had already passed the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile. Three o'clock had already struck.

"We are late," said George.

De Chambly looked at his watch.

"Only five minutes," he said.

"That is too much, a great deal too much for a duel."

"For a serious duel, I grant you, yes."

"Do you consider this one a mere farce then, de Chambly?"

"God forbid, my dear fellow; but I confess that I consider the cause of the quarrel takes away from its importance. To fight for a game of baccarat!"

"The game of baccarat was not the true motive of this duel, you know that as well as I do; it was the insult which terminated it. That is what makes it, whatever you may say to the contrary, a serious duel."

"I regret extremely not having taken some measures to prevent it; for if it ends fatally for you, my dear fellow, I shall never be able to console myself during the rest of my life."

"Thank you, de Chambly, for your promise of regrets; but in these sort of affairs, it seems to me, seconds ought to adopt the role of diplomatists, as in conflicts between nations. When war was inevitable, no Tallyrand, as far as I know, would waste regret on the death of the vanquished. Do the same. Besides," added George with a smile, "do I look like a dying man?"

"No, indeed."

"Then imitate me; trust to my lucky star. Right is on my side; that is two thirds of the victory. Give me a cigar."

"I admire your coolness!"

"Is it not in season?—Brrr!—One would have to be formed of lava to resist this Siberian temperature. Ah! you were wrong to choose pistols; fencing would have warmed us up."

"It is not only that, but, under this gray sky, in the midst of these leafless trees, your figures will be as clearly defined as targets!"

"All the better, we shall be able to aim more correctly."

"Do you wish then to kill the marquis?"

"Do you take me for a cannibal? I hope on the contrary, thanks to my skill, to wound him only slightly."

"That's right! You are a brave man, and a gentleman, de Maurange."

"He deserves your praise," said the other second, who until then had been a silent listener.

"I shall try to be worth of your good opinion, gentlemen."

Silence followed this conversation.

By this time, they had almost overtaken the marquis' carriage, which now, without waiting for them any longer, proceeded on its way to Neuilly.

"Monsieur de Aviella leads the way," said George. Then he lay back in the carriage, muffling himself

up closely in the furlined pelisse he had thrown on before starting. With a cigar between his lips, absently watching his adversary's carriage, he forgot de Chambly and his companion, and was soon buried in deep thought.

Who could this woman be who did not wish the marquis to be killed? and yet so ardently desired that he might be wounded? What peculiar feeling could instigate her to act thus? To what class of society did she belong? Her air of undoubted distinction was not that of a woman of fashion, and yet she issued her orders like one accustomed to be obeyed. Could there be another secret in the life of this cursed Sanchez than the one revealed by that repulsive black? "I am altogether at a loss what to think," he reflected. "Nevertheless, my future depends on her. Of that I am certain. I feel it. This woman is beautiful, almost as beautiful as Clotilde. To judge from our bargain, she must possess an immense fortune. Then what looks, what a voice, so gentle and imperious at the same time! She is a veritable serpent for fascination and charm; I am impatient to see her again.

Am I in love with her already? It seems to me I am in rather an inflammable mood. No. The romance latent in every intelligent man's nature

is affecting me, that is all. Will I love her one day? Not more than I do now. How oddly we are constituted! Since this marquis, whom Heaven confound, has come between Clotilde and me, I am really in love with her. Obstacles have more to do with making a man fall in love than the most powerful of philters. Oh! that Sanchez, I do believe I hate him! He may be thankful to Heaven for the intervention of this unknown beauty, who made me promise not to kill him. Besides she has acted for the best! D'Aviella's death would have been the surest means of ensuring my failure in the journey I was about to undertake to the Pactolus."

It can be gathered from this monologue that George was perfectly calm. De Chambly interrupted his reverie.

"The marquis' carriage has stopped," he said.

"Let us stop also, then."

The marquis, Durouget and d'Arthéville descended at this moment from their carriage. A fourth person followed them. This was Gomez, who, as he had promised, would not desert his master. On leaving the hotel he had said to d'Aveilla.

"Let me accompany you, Monsieur le Marquis?"

"It is useless, Gomez."

"Let me beg as a great favor."

"This is an old retainer of our family, gentlemen," Sanchez had explained. "Have I your permission to let him accompany us."

"Most certainly."

Gomez took the fourth place in the carriage.

Sanchez and Durouget were seated together, and while d'Arthèville, charmed with the martial air of the old Brazilian, entered into conversation with him, the marquis observed to Durouget:

"I repeat once more my thanks to you for acting as my second in this affair, Monsieur Durouget; but I have still another favor to ask you."

"Name it, marquis."

"It is that you promise me to keep this duel a profound secret from everyone."

"I promise."

"Above all, from Monsieur Schunberg!"

"From everyone, that is understood."

"Thank you. I particularly desire that the marchioness, my mother, may not know anything about it."

"You can rely on me to second your wishes."

Sanchez shook hands cordially with him.

The horses they drove were excellent; so they arrived at the Arc de l'Etoile a few minutes before the hour indicated.

"Is Monsieur de Maurange there?" demanded Sanchez.

"Not yet," replied d'Artheville, after having looked round carefully.

"I do not see any one," added Gomez.

"Let us wait; they will not keep us waiting much longer."

With the exception of the few words exchanged between the steward and d'Arthéville, and the short dialogue related above, not one word had been exchanged between the four occupants of the carriage.

D'Arthéville had forced himself to observe an unusually serious demeanor. Durouget tried to preserve a grave silence. Gomez was too anxious not to remain mute while Sanchez, a prey to jealousy and hate, could only think of the approaching duel, and already killed George in his thoughts.

"How late they are," he remarked after a few minutes.

"Keep calm, Monsieur le Marquis, keep calm, I beg of you."

"I will, Gomez."

"Ah! here they are," cried d'Arthéville who had just seen the advancing carriage.

"Let us go on, then."

The horses advanced at a slower pace.

When they reached the Porte Maillot, Durouget gave the order to stop. They descended; de Maurange and his seconds followed their example, and all entered one of the larger alleys of the Bois. At a short distance from the entrance a coupé was stationed. A young man, dressed in black and wearing a white cravat, descended from it.

"Ah! there is the doctor," said d'Arthéville holding out his hand to the new comer.

"What, you thought?—What was the use of troubling monsieur."

"A doctor, my dear marquis, is indispensable in such a case. Monsieur Sylvan," added he introducing the man of science to the Marquis d'Aviella.

The doctor and Sanchez bowed.

"We will see about the concluding arrangements," said d'Arthéville. "Come, Durouget."

They turned back to meet de Chambly and George's other second, who imitated their example and left the latter alone.

The four seconds were now together.

"Is Monsieur d'Aviella still of the same mind?" demanded de Chambly.

The same. And Monsieur de Maurange?"

"Also the same; there is nothing more to be

done now than choose an advantageous spot."

"If you will follow me," said Gaston, "I know where there is an open place which seems made expressly for affairs of this kind."

"All right; we will go and inform Monsieur de Maurange."

They again separated, but very little time passed before the seven men entered a narrow alley, d'Arthéville acting as guide.

"This is the place," said the latter, after a short walk.

"Admirable! The place seems predestined."

The spot indicated, which answered admirably to the exigencies of the occasion, was a rather wide path from the borders of which the trees had been recently cut down; in this way, no mark could serve as a guide to the eye of either of the combatants.

"Here are Monsieur d'Aviella's weapons," said Durouget, taking the box from Gomez; "we declare formally, both Monsieur d'Arthéville and I, that the marquis saw them for the first time only an hour ago, and has never used them."

"Here are Monsieur de Maurange's," replied de Chambly, "monsieur and I make the same declaration concerning them."

"Let us draw lots. Or better still, you toss a coin up!"

"Here goes then! Cry."

"Heads!"

"It is heads."

"Then we will use Monsieur de Maurange's weapons."

"Very well."

"Count the paces, de Chambly."

"Willingly."

"We are going to load."

During this time, Gomez kept near his master.

"Keep calm, keep cool," he repeated.

"You may depend upon me, I will!"

"Is your hand steady?"

"Feel."

"Yes, that is right, your pulse is quiet."

"Oh! I shall kill him, Gomez, I am sure of it."

Calmer than Sanchez, de Maurange absently switched a stunted arbutus tree with a little whip he held in his hand.

"The more serious the wound is the better will I be satisfied," said the black haired enigma. Ah! well! I will break one of his arms, as sure as I break this twig," he concluded.

"Are you ready?" de Chambly asked him.

"Perfectly," replied George taking off his pelisse.

Sanchez threw off his overcoat. Completely clothed in black, and buttoned up to the chin, without any apparent linen, not a line of white was to be distinguished in either of their costumes.

When they arrived at the place marked out, de Chambly handed George his pistol.

"Take care, it is loaded. You will both fire at the third call. D'Arthèville will give the signal."

"I understand. Wait, de Chambly, one word. You remember my last instructions regarding that letter I gave you? If I am seriously wounded—"

"I will open it, and forward the enclosure to its address immediately."

"And if I am killed?"

"Burn it, without opening the letter."

"Exactly. Once more, thank you."

Sanchez was in his place.

The seconds had withdrawn to one side.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" demanded Gaston.

"Yes," said George in a sonorous voice.

The marquis replied by an affirmative sign of the head.

He held his weapon up and was already taking aim.

"Fire! One—two—three—," said Gaston striking his hands together.

One shot alone rang out on the still air.

"Ah!" said de Maurange as he sank into the arms of his seconds who had rushed to his assistance on seeing him stagger.

The marquis' ball had struck him full in the chest.

"How did it happen he did not fire?" exclaimed Gaston d'Arthéville, drawing near, all his sympathy being with George.

They picked up the pistol that had dropped from the hand of the wounded man. The trigger was down, but the barrel remained still loaded. The cap, badly placed by de Chambly's frozen fingers, had dropped off during the short conversation he had held with George.

"What did I tell you?" said the marquis with a pale smile to Gomez.

The doctor, bending over the wounded man, examined him attentively.

"Well, doctor?" demanded Durouget.

"It is serious, but we can save him."

Gaston rushed up to Sanchez.

"Reassure yourself, my dear marquis, Monsieur de Maurange's wound is not perhaps, mortal."

An almost imperceptible frown welcomed this announcement, but making a supreme effort to

control himself, Sanchez replied courteously:

"Please tell, Monsieur de Maurange, I beg of you, that I offer him my apologies."

At this moment, a shadow passed at some distance among the leafless trees. It was a woman who, without being observed, had witnessed the duel.

"Ah! it is the other!" she cried on seeing de Maurange fall. "Never mind, Marquis Sanchez, you are under the protection of hell; but by the sufferings of him who is no more, I swear again, that nothing, less than death, will cure my hate. And now, happy lover, go, go and marry Clotilde."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE AT NEUILLY.

Maurice had fainted when he fell. Sylvan, with the quickness of a skilled practitioner placed a temporary bandage on the wound. They were considering how to transport George to his rooms.

"It is impossible to have him conveyed in a carriage," said Sylvan. "So long as the ball is not extracted, there is danger of internal hemorrhage which the slightest movement might bring on."

"How can we manage it then?" said de Chambly shivering.

"Let one of you return to Paris at once; I will give you an order on the hospital to send a covered litter immediately," replied Sylvan.

"I am ready to go," said d'Arthèville; "but the night is falling—And while waiting here, what will you do?"

In fact the duel had taken place at a very late hour. The wounded man could not be left there.

A woman's voice was heard speaking.

"Pardon me, gentlemen."

All present turned round. The one who had just spoken was the stranger who had purchased the marquis' life from George that very morning

- "I heard a pistol shot a moment ago, gentlemen," she said. "I guessed what had taken place as well as the very awkward position you would find yourself in. Will you allow me to offer hospitality to your friend! My country house is not far from here."

The proposal was a singular one. The one who made it was young and beautiful. Durouget could not repress a smile in spite of the solemnity of the occasion. De Chambly was too cold to understand what it was all about. The doctor alone remained calm and unmoved. He thought only of the wounded man. The young woman waited. Sylvan looked at her searchingly. The four witnesses watched the doctor.

"I accept," said the latter. "Come, gentlemen, we must try and construct a litter for Monsieur de Maurange ourselves."

"That is not necessary, gentlemen," said the stranger.

She then, with her left hand, took hold of a small whistle which hung suspended from a belt

under her mantle, and raising it to her lips made the woods echo with a clear sharp whistle. At the call, a new personage made his appearance. He was an old man, with bronzed skin, tall and thin, with piercing eyes. A sort of blackish parchment covered his prominent cheek bones, and a long white beard and mustache covered his thin lips under a straight and pointed nose.

His eyes were black, his teeth long and regular. A long, dark garment, more like a robe than a coat, enveloped him from head to foot, and as a head-dress, he wore a fur cap in the form of a cone, giving the finishing touch to his striking appearance. The cap was black. His long white hair escaped from under it. The eyebrows alone of this singular individual had lost nothing of their original tint of ebony. He came forward leisurely to the young woman.

"Order them to bring the palanquin here, Schiba," she said to him.

At this request, the old man took in his turn a whistle hidden under his robe and gave a piercing whistle, having a different sound from the one used by his mistress.

A few seconds passed, during which all the seconds waited in silence, then the snow cracked

under the weight of several persons, and presently, four men, carrying a palanquin, joined the group formed round the figure of the wounded man. These men, young and strong, clothed in a fashion almost analogous to that worn by the old Indian, seemed, by the skillful manner in which they handled the palanquin, to belong to that numerous class of *bahis*, noted in India for their vigor, the rapidity with which they walk and the regularity of their tread. Such an equipage, in a corner of the Bois de Boulogne surpassed imagination. The palanquin was placed on the ground. The stranger spoke in an Indian dialect to Schiba. The old man made a sign. The four men approached the wounded man. Sylvan, still bending over George, got up quickly to prevent them from touching him.

"You need not be afraid, doctor," explained the stranger, "they are very skillful."

The friendly smile accompanying this speech disarmed the doctor's doubts. He gave place to the bearers, and they lifted and placed de Maurange in the palanquin with a delicacy of handling hardly to be surpassed by the most practiced nurses.

"Let us go, gentlemen," said the stranger.

They started. Schiba led the way, then followed

the palanquin, borne on the shoulders of the *bahis*. The four seconds followed, and the doctor, with the stranger were, for a moment, left alone. Sylvan, who was standing on her right, offered her his arm. She passed to the other side and took his right arm. Durouget and d'Arthéville talked while walking.

"What a singular adventure," said Durouget.

"Singular indeed," said d'Arthéville.

"That devil of a George has Indian princesses at his call," continued Durouget.

"You do not know what you are speaking about, Durouget; that woman is no more Indian than we are. Her attendants are, but she is not; she is more southern in her type."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"What do you think, de Chambly?"

"I shall give my opinion the first fire we come across. Brrr—"

"Poor de Chambly! he would ice a bottle of champagne only by looking at it!" cried Durouget.

The conversation between Sylvan and the young woman was more serious.

"What do you think of this wound, doctor?" she asked.

"I cannot exactly determine yet, madame; all depends on the operation I am about to make, as soon as we arrive."

The improvised caravan reached the spot where the carriage had stopped. D'Arthèville drew Sylvan aside:

"You will not leave your patient?"

"Most certainly not."

"Would you like one of us to accompany you?"

"No. I shall call in at the club this evening and give you all news of him."

Gaston dared not insist.

"Very well then, until then, good bye. But tell me, does this young woman not awaken your curiosity?"

"She does, I confess it, but she is doing me a great service, if I save de Maurange, he will owe his life to her."

Schiba, still followed by the *bahis*, entered a side alley; he then stopped them and came back to the stranger. The four seconds made a halt for a moment. "Adieu," said Sylvan to them, "take my carriage. I will find one at Neuilly."

"I can send you back in mine, monsieur," said the young woman.

The seconds bowed.

"Adieu, gentlemen," she added.

"Sahib sulamut,"* said Schiba in Hindostanee.

Then when Durouget, d'Arthéville, de Chambly and the other second had left to get into their carriages:

"Go on," said the unknown to Schiba again taking the doctor's arm.

The *bahis*, on a sign from the old man, resumed their slow measured walk, so regular that the wounded man never felt the slightest movement.

It was now almost dark.

"Have we far to go, madame?" demanded Sylvan.

"We shall arrive in a quarter of an hour."

A third whistle was heard a few instants later.

"What is the meaning of that?" demanded Sylvan.

"It is Schiba, to let my people know of our return."

However preoccupied he might be about his patient, the doctor began to be astonished.

The stranger divined this.

"The manner in which I am served surprises you, monsieur?" she observed, "but nothing is more simple. I am wealthy and have lived in India several years, those men whom you see, including even Schiba, are slaves, and what appears to you

* "May God be with you."

singular here, would be a very ordinary occurrence at Calcutta or Bombay. And look, Schiba's orders have been understood; here they are, come to meet us."

Sylvan looked up. The wood seemed illuminated. Several figures bearing lighted torches advanced towards the palanquin. The glare from the torches on the snow produced a fantastic effect by defining the skeleton outlines of the naked branches of the trees against the deep, black blue, of the winter sky. A few minutes later, the torch joined the bearers of the palanquin, and the rest of the walk was finished by the light of the moving flame. Arrived at one of the outlets of the Bois opening on the highroad running along the banks of the Seine, Schiba, followed by his men, led them up a small pathway to the left, and passing through a magnificent gateway into a large garden, in the midst of which stood a house of rare architectural beauty.

De Maurange had recovered consciousness, but was still confused; it was only when he was placed on the bed of a richly furnished room on the ground floor, that he began to comprehend what had happened to him.

"Who are you?" he demanded of Schiba.

"Chop,"* replied the Indian.

"But where am I? Who are these men?"

"Friends," replied Sylvan drawing near him.

"Ah! it is you, doctor! I am wounded, am I not?—And the marquis?"

"Nothing happened to him," said in her turn, the stranger, approaching the bed. "You kept your word."

"You!" exclaimed George stupefied.

"Silence; do not say another word; the least emotion might be fatal. Come, doctor, do your duty. Schiba and my attendants will wait on you."

This brought Sylvan back to the reality. Seeing that the stranger and de Maurange were acquainted, he had yielded, in spite of himself, to a series of the wildest suppositions. But now he quickly undid his case of instruments and began the operation. In a moment the ball was extracted. Schiba held a flask to George's nostrils. The operation had been painful; the ball, tearing through the flesh had penetrated to an extremely sensitive part of the body. When all was over, and a fresh bandage arranged:

"Ah! you have plenty of pluck, Monsieur de Maurange!" said Sylvan admiringly.

* "Silence."

"I did not feel anything," said George.

Sylvan threw an enquiring glance across at Schiba, who contented himself by replying with a meaning smile, as he replaced the flask in his pocket.

"Doctor," then said George, "will I recover?"

"If you keep perfectly still, I can answer for it."

"And how long will it be before I am on my feet again?"

"In about three weeks. Only, don't speak; the least effort might prove fatal."

"One more question, the last."

"Well."

"Where is de Chambly?"

"He has gone back to Paris with the other seconds."

"Ah! thank you, doctor."

"She will have my letter this evening," he thought. "Ah! Monsieur d'Aviella, you are not yet Monsieur Schunberg's son-in-law."

The stranger addressed some words in Hindostanee to Schiba, then approaching the bed:

"You must make yourself quite at home," said she to George, "order anything you require. Schiba will understand and see that you are obeyed. Keep yourself calm. To-morrow, I will explain

how you came here. Adieu. Doctor, will you be good enough to come into my boudoir; I have something I wish to say to you while they bring the carriage round to drive you back to Paris."

"With pleasure, madame!"

Sylvan and the stranger passed into the adjoining room. The word boudoir, which the young woman had used, was really the only one which could apply to this apartment. A vast divan, covered with Indian cashmere adorned one side of the room. The walls were draped with the same rich material, while jardinieres filled with the rarest plants, perfumed the atmosphere. Flowers in full bloom were placed in priceless china vases, and to judge from their extreme freshness, replenished every day. A soft carpet covered the floor, while a large mirror, framed in hanging of the same color as those of the walls, reached from the mantle to the ceiling. A hanging lamp threw across a globe of pink crystal, a vivid light which enhanced the luxurious aspect of this charming abode.

"Let us sit down while we talk," said the lovely stranger pointing out a circular divan to Sylvan.

He obeyed.

His hostess took a low chair and placed herself before him, turning her back to the light. In this

way she could see the doctor's features perfectly, while Sylvan could only see her's imperfectly.

"I have known Monsieur de Maurange a long time, she continued. "You must have remarked that we are not strangers to each other."

"I did perceive as much, madame."

"We are friends, nothing more."

"Oh! madame!"

"I understand, doctor; you would not think of questioning me, you wish to say nevertheless, let me explain. I knew of this duel, and feared it would end as it has done. What is of importance now, is that no one should know of Monsieur de Maurange's presence in my house. But first, monsieur, do you know the cause of this encounter?"

"Yes, madame, a quarrel over a game of cards."

"Ah! Then you do not know it."

"That is, at least, what I was told by the Marquis d'Aviella's seconds."

"They think so, but they have been deceived. The quarrel at the gaming table of which they spoke to you, was only a pretext; the real cause was a woman!"

"A woman!" repeated Sylvan.

"Yes, a young girl, whom Monsieur de Maurange and the marquis both love. I can give you her

name; an entire confidence will alone ensure your discretion. The young girl is Mademoiselle Schunberg."

"The banker's daughter?"

"The same. I am a widow, free, still young; some say beautiful. If she hears that I have received Monsieur George into my house, unjust suspicions may ruin him forever in her esteem; that is why I request you to tell your friends, that the operation over, you were able to have M. de Maurange transported to his own rooms, and he is now there. Can I count upon you?"

"Yes, madame. I appreciate the delicacy of feeling which prompts you to act thus, and will prove to you that I am willing to carry out your wishes."

"That is well."

One of the *bahis* entered at the sound of a bell on which the stranger had pressed her finger. He answered by a sign in the affirmative to a question which his mistress addressed to him in Hindostanee.

"The carriage is waiting for you," she said to Sylvan. "I do not wish to waste your time, which I know must be valuable, doctor."

"Thank you, madame. I shall return to-morrow to see my patient."

"Very well, doctor; but it is understood he is at home in his own rooms?"

"Perfectly so, madame."

"Then good bye, doctor."

"Good bye, madame."

Sylvan bowed and left the room. He found a well appointed coupé awaiting him in the yard, which as soon as he entered, carried him at a rapid pace to Paris. The stranger, left alone, rang three times. Schiba appeared.

"Where do you come from?" demanded the young woman in Hindostanee, astonished to see him enter by the door opposite to the one communicating with the bed chamber of the wounded man.

"The Sahib sent me away; he wished to be left alone to sleep."

"What do you think of his wound?"

"I think that if Vechnon aids me, he will be quite well in eight days."

"That is well. I shall count upon it."

CHAPTER X.

LOVE FEVER.

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when Sylvan, after leaving Neuilly in the stranger's carriage, passed a cab going in the direction of the house he had just left. This cab, in which sat Madame Firmin, stopped before the gate of the garden in the midst of which the stranger's dwelling was situated.

"Shall I drive to the house door?" demanded the driver.

"No," replied Clotilde's governess, descending from the cab; "wait for me here."

So saying, she disappeared through a small side door and walked up to the principal entrance like a person well acquainted with the place. Some moments afterwards, one of the servants came and conducted her to the boudoir where we left the stranger with Schiba.

"You, so late?" exclaimed the mistress of the house on seeing the companion, "you have something important to tell me?"

"Yes, madame."

"Speak then. Schiba, leave us."

"Yes, mistress, I am going; it is the hour of prayer. I will join your name with Baxios-ahib's and Nahoua's. May Vichua grant them happiness for eternity and may Brahma avenge us by delivering us from our enemies!" said the old Indian in a solemn tone of voice. Then he left.

Madame Firmin was probably as well acquainted with Schiba as she was with the house, for the strange words she listened to did not seem to surprise her.

"I am ready to listen," said the stranger when the khansaman had disappeared.

"We are going away."

"Where to?"

"I do not know."

"Since when have you known this?"

"Since this morning."

"And who told you?"

"Mademoiselle Clotilde."

"Why did you lose so much time in coming to tell me?"

"I came here at half past four, madame, but you had gone out, and so had M. Schiba. Knowing I would be free this evening, I returned to the

hotel, promising myself to come back here as soon as mademoiselle left for the *Italiens* with her father, and it was a fortunate thought, for here is what I found on returning home."

"What is it?"

"An anonymous letter which I am requested to hand to Mademoiselle, accompanying this demand with a note for five hundred francs."

A vague murmur, something like a sigh, sounded at this moment. Madame Firmin was slightly deaf; and the young woman was so preoccupied that she did not notice it.

"And this letter, have you got it with you?"

"Yes, madame, here it is."

The stranger took the letter and opened it. When she had glanced over it, a livid pallor overspread her features, her lips turned blue, and her whole frame shivered as she gasped:

"Who could have discovered his crime?"

"Heavens! what is the matter with you, madame?" said Madame Firmin, seeing the emotion of the stranger.

Instead of answering, the latter signed to her to be silent, and with her eyes fixed on the anonymous letter, appeared to abandon herself to the most absorbing thought. The governess waited respect-

fully. Suddenly, the stranger got up and hurriedly rang the bell three times; then waited impatiently.

Very soon, Schiba reappeared.

"Here, look!" said the young woman holding out the letter to him.

The agitation the khansaman felt after reading it, was not inferior to what his mistress had shown. Only his bronze face remained impassible and except for a slight tremor in his hands, this emotion would not have been perceptible to any one.

"Schiba," said the stranger, "we must discover the person who knows this secret."

"I will discover it, mistress."

"Here, madame," said the young woman, addressing Madame Firmin, "the service you have rendered me to-day is worthy of a large reward. Take this diamond, it is worth 5000 francs; I give it to you."

"Five thousand francs!" gasped the governess, completely dazzled with delight as she seized the ring offered to her.

"Yes, but listen to me. Do you know where this letter came from?"

"No, madame?"

"Who left it at the hotel?"

"A very fashionable looking, elderly gentleman."

"And this gentleman? did you ever see him before?"

"No, madame. The footman could not pronounce his name."

"Could he recognize it, if he heard it again?"

"I did not ask him that, madame."

"At what hour was the letter delivered?"

"About six o'clock."

It will be seen that de Chambly had not taken time to dine before executing George's commission.

"It must have been already dark; I suppose the footman could not distinguish the bearer's features?" continued the young woman.

"No, madame, I do not think so."

"Then we can find out nothing through him. But this writing, is it quite unknown to you?"

"Quite, madame."

"We must, however, find out who this letter came from, must we not, Schiba?"

"Yes, mistress."

"Will you return it to me, madame?"

"For what purpose?"

"To give it to Mademoiselle Clotilde."

"No. Mademoiselle Schunberg must not see this letter."

"Ah!"—gasped a voice from behind the curtains.

"What is that, Schiba?"

"The wounded man who is doubtless awakening, mistress."

"You must go and attend to him; but first, let us burn this letter it is of no importance, for this Lakhmi has never existed, and this dark accusation is only a calumny. Let us burn it."

She held the letter to a taper which the old Indian had lighted for her and threw the burning paper into the fireplace, where it was immediately consumed.

"Stop!—Stop!"—cried out a voice.

The door was thrown violently open. The three occupants of the room turned round. Madame Firmin gave a cry of terror. George de Maurange, livid and with blood stained garments had just entered and allowing himself to drop on the divan, repeated in an imperious and despairing voice:

"Stop!—Stop!—don't burn that letter!"

"Too late!" said Schiba.

De Maurange, when he begged the khansaman to leave him alone, was only dozing. The shock inflicted on his body by the dangerous wound he had received, had been productive of fever, violent enough to exercise a powerful influence on his ideas. The smiling image of Clotilde crossed his thoughts and brightened them as a star lights up



"STOP! STOP! DON'T BURN THAT LETTER." P. 214.

the sky. She seemed to him more beautiful, more radiant than ever. He could almost feel the blonde perfumed tresses of the banker's daughter against his face.

A feeling of extreme quietude, approaching to tenderness took possession of him; his more positive ideas vanished, his heart opened and Clotilde's presence seemed to shed a halo of love and peace all around him. Then, before long, he became the victim of a hideous nightmare, full of fever and excitement, shadow and light. The shadow was Sanchez, with raised pistol, pale features, compressed lips, shooting from his eyes and mouth balls enveloped in thick, black smoke which entered into George's body, burning as lava, incisive as the teeth of a panther. The light was Clotilde, smiling, vaporous, bending over him with a look of innocent love. Weakened by the loss of blood, de Maurange struggled with these two images and ended by completely banishing the sinister image of d'Aviella and retaining only the soothing gentle apparition of Clotilde.

At this moment, he loved her, not her princely fortune, but herself, alone. Life without her seemed perdition. This overthrow of all his ideas was so violent that he was astonished at himself; but this

surprise was of short duration, and he soon yielded to the full indulgence of his love.

"Clotilde, dear Clotilde," he murmured, "I shall live only to love you, angel of innocence and beauty; all my heart and devotion belongs to you henceforth."

The room in which de Maurange was lying, was only separated from the boudoir by a thin partition. Madame Firmin's arrival broke the silence reigning around the wounded man. The governess' voice was unknown to him, but the name of Clotilde as she pronounced it, arrested his attention, and very soon, he did not doubt but that the letter handed to his hostess by Madame Firmin, was the one addressed to her by himself. This discovery came upon him like a thunder clap.

Without being able to take a clear view of the situation in its entire bearing, he only fully comprehended the unfavorable side; he said to himself that Clotilde, being ignorant of the marquis' crime, would no longer hesitate to marry him, and he would not have this happen, should he undergo a thousand deaths to prevent it.

"I must get back that letter, that woman must give it to her mistress," he reflected. "I will convince this singular woman in whose house I am, that this must be. Ah! yes, I must!"

By a singular coincidence, and as if the stranger answered in reply to his thoughts, it was at that very instant that she said:

“No, Mademoiselle Schunberg must not see this letter.”

George tried to call out to protest against this decision, but his voice died away in his throat; he made an effort to raise himself, and fell back on the pillows with a moan of pain. When afterwards, he heard his hostess deny the perpetration of the crime Manoel knew his master to be guilty of, his agitation redoubled, then at last, at the words “Let us burn it!” which destroyed all his plans and must forever ruin his hopes, despair gave him strength. Uniting all that was left of energy and strength, supporting himself on the furniture as he went along, he reached the other room, and fell exhausted on the divan in the boudoir, to the great alarm and terror of Madame Firmin and the profound astonishment of Schiba and the stranger. Without hearing the khansaman, George understood by the odor of burned paper that the letter no longer existed.

“Oh! this is infamous!” he cried, “what right had you to destroy that letter? I made a bargain with you, it is true, and kept my part loyally.

That letter contained only the truth; the marquis d'Aviella is a murderer!"

"Who told you?"

"That is my secret! We have both secrets, madame! Do I know by what feelings you are guided? Do I know why you burned this letter? Do I know how it happens that this woman,"—he pointed to Madame Firmin—"is your accomplice in the dark plot you are contriving against me?"

"Against you?"

"Yes, against me! This morning you prevented me from killing the marquis, this evening, you prevent me from denouncing him to the woman I love, and thus secure his happiness at the expense of my own."

"This anonymous letter was then from you?"

"Who else besides myself would have thought of saving Clotilde! Lakhmi, the slave, did exist. Such truths are never invented; she was murdered by d'Aviella; I was right in my first conjecture, that man is a monster."

"But who told you?"

"You will never know. I am tired of this species of authority which you have exercised over me for several hours past. Who are you? I do not

know. You dazzled me for a moment by your promises, and I yielded; now, I am here in your house. I do not know how, or why. All I understand is that it is through you I am losing Clotilde, and I will not lose her. I love her well enough to die in order to spare her one tear, not for her fortune, but for herself. Take back your gold. I do not want it, but do not interfere with my affairs again. You have no right to do so, and I forbid it!"

He stopped, exhausted by the violence of his passion.

"You had better leave us," said the young woman to the governess, "and forget all you have seen and heard."

"Madame can count upon my devotion."

"Don't go," said George making another effort. "I shall write another note, and I beg you, let Clotilde have it."

The tone in which the young man said these words was so heartrending that Madame Firmin, who was just crossing the threshold of the door, stopped.

"What are you waiting for? You know that I alone command here!" said the stranger to the governess.

Madame Firmin hastened to obey.

"Ah!" exclaimed George, "you wish that this marriage should take place? But you may adopt what means you like, it shall never be. I will go away from here. I will act for myself!"

He stood up, pale and trembling as he uttered these words.

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to leave this house this instant! where you seem to imprison me."

"Be calm for a moment; this excitement may lead to serious consequences."

"I prefer death, to life without Clotilde! Let me pass, I will go."

"Wait until to-morrow, and I will explain everything."

"To-morrow Clotilde may be married!" replied George, his exasperation reaching its height.

"Let me pass!"

And seizing with surprising force the stranger's right hand, he tried by a sudden pull to make her move away from the door, before which she had taken up her position; but the young woman remained stationary, her arm alone being affected by the vigorous wrench which the wounded man had given her. Under George's effort, this arm,

lengthened out beyond measure, the cold, hard hand remaining in his feverish grasp, and when, mad with terror at the sight of this strange spectacle, George let it drop, the hand fell helplessly down by the young woman's side, until it nearly touched the floor.

"Ah! my God!" said he, "she is a demon!"

He fell his full length on the floor. Schiba and the stranger rushed to his assistance. George was as pale as death; a slight red foam rose to his lips.

"Look, look, Schiba!"

"The bandage has moved, he is choking, mistress!"

"He must be saved at any cost. I must know how he has found out our secret; do you understand, Schiba? I do not wish him to die. His love for Clotilde interferes with our plans, but he must be induced to listen to reason."

"If he recovers, that will be an easy matter, mistress, for it was not his heart that was speaking it was the fever; I could see that."

"All the more reason for saving him. Ah! look, the blood is coming more quickly, make haste!"

"There is only one practicable method of saving him, but neither you nor I can employ it."

"What is it?"

"To put your lips to the wound and suck the blood so as to relieve the flow to the chest. I have not enough strength, and it would disgust you, mistress."

"What is to be done?"

"His moments are counted, he will die."

"Ah! my God! All is lost! But no. I have thought of something, call the *bahis*."

Schiba quickly threw open the door after having first supported George's head on a cushion, which seemed for a moment to arrest the hemorrhage, and gave two whistles. Three of the Indians who had carried the palanquin on which the wounded man had been transported, appeared.

"A thousand rupees for the one who will suck the wound of this man!" said the young woman.

One of the newcomers instantly knelt down over the wounded man and fastened his lips to the wound that Schiba had uncovered. While this experiment was going on, the old Indian drew from a small carved box, a large, black pill, and held it to the candle. A singular, strangely aromatic odor filled the apartment. An instant later, George breathed.

"Enough," said Schiba to the *bahis*.

He then approached the wounded man, lifted his head gently and holding the pill over his lips, pressed it, and a drop of vermillion colored fluid slowly flowed into George's mouth. He opened his eyes almost at the same moment.

"Well, what do you think?" said the unknown anxiously.

"Oh! now, mistress, I can answer for him."

An hour later, the unknown said to Schiba:

"Is it time?"

"Yes, but I repeat again," he replied, "that this experiment will be most dangerous, considering the extreme weakness of the wounded man."

"Do you not like to attempt it?"

"Order and I will obey, mistress."

"I do not wish to go to sleep to-night until I find out how he discovered the marquis' crime."

"Then, I shall proceed," replied Schiba standing up.

He stooped over the sufferer and having made him inhale from the same flask which had made him so completely unconscious while Sylvan was dressing his wound, placed one hand on his head and with the other closed his eyes, placing the thumb on the right eyeball and the first finger on the left. De Maurange remained inert and quiet

incapable of pronouncing a word. Schiba remained a long time in this position. At last, the invalid heaved a deep sigh, conveying the impression of complete beatitude.

"He sleeps," said the old Indian.

"Will he speak?"

"He will. I wish you to speak," he said addressing the wounded man.

"I will speak," murmured George with an effort.

"Come near, mistress, and listen."

The young woman obeyed.

"Take his hand and interrogate him yourself."

"Who told you," said the unknown, "the marquis was a murderer?"

"Speak!" ordered Schiba in a tone of authority.

"No," replied the wounded man. "I shall not speak."

"I wish it!" said the unknown with authority.

"I wish it!" repeated Schiba.

"You will know nothing."

"You see, Schiba, he will not speak."

"Patience, mistress!"

And fixing his piercing eyes on de Maurange with an eagle like glance, the khansaman saturated him with all the magnetic fluid which he could dispose of.

"Speak," ordered he again, making George once more inhale the contents of the flask. "How did you learn that the marquis had committed this crime?"

De Maurange's face expressed extreme agony; he seemed to struggle with all his remaining strength against this invisible power which the old Indian exercised over him.

"Speak," repeated the latter in a firm voice, "Who told you the marquis was a murderer?"

George made a last effort to resist, but his lips opened in spite of himself and these words escaped him:

"A negro."

"His name?"

"Yes, his name?" repeated the unknown.

"Manoel."

The young woman and Schiba exchanged a look of intelligence.

"Enough, enough, mistress!" said the old Indian, "he cannot bear any more."

In fact, de Maurange, a prey to strange excitement, began to tremble violently.

"I know all I wanted," said the young woman, abandoning her hold of the wounded man's hand; "we must gain over Manoel"

Schiba was bending over George making him inhale from the flask.

The latter's face soon assumed its former calm expression and his body was again in repose.

"Now, let us think of to-morrow, Schiba! You know what I have told you; this man is necessary to my plans, his love for Clotilde is not serious. Once cured, he belongs to us. Only, I do not wish the doctor to see him again. We require solitude in order to pursue our work. Invent some means by which we can prevent Monsieur Sylvan from seeing his patient."

"I have thought of it already, and found it, mistress."

"And what is it?"

"You will soon learn."

Saying these words, Schiba got up and went out, but soon reappeared, holding a writing case and ink bottle in his hands.

"Are you going to write, Schiba?"

"I am not, but he is," he answered indicating George.

"Monsieur de Maurange! It is impossible. How can he, in his present state of weakness, manage even to hold a pen?"

"He will hold a pen, and write," said Schiba,

bringing a table near to George, and placing within reach of his hand a pen dipped in ink and a sheet of note paper.

The young woman watched the preparation her companion busied himself about, with curious interest; but the expression of doubt on her countenance indicated the little amount of faith she had in the extraordinary experiment the old Indian had undertaken. The latter perceived it, and repeated:

“He will write, mistress, he will write.”

“But to whom?”

“To the French doctor.”

“And what will he write?”

“Whatever you dictate.”

“And what must I dictate?”

“A letter explaining to the doctor that his patient has left this very evening for Poitou, so that he may be nursed by his own family.”

“I understand.”

“Be prepared; take his hand, mistress, and begin as soon as you see him holding the pen.”

“I am ready.”

The old Indian passed behind George, darting again one of his piercing looks on him; he then placed his hand on the wounded man's head, and seemed to concentrate the full force of his will on

him. Then a most extraordinary thing took place. As if he had been moved by some invisible power, George, his eyes still closed, raised himself slowly, took the pen, held it over the paper and pronounced the word:

"Dictate!"

Mute with astonishment the young woman remained silent.

"Dictate! Dictate! mistress, every moment is precious, if you do not wish him to die."

"Dear doctor," said the unknown slowly, watching the sick man's pen, which traced each word as she pronounced it, "you have wrought a miracle. I cannot remain any longer here. I leave this evening for Poiton, accompanied by the old steward of the friend who was kind enough to receive me here. I shall soon send you more news.

"George de Maurange."

The letter was finished.

"Let me act now, mistress, and I must lose no time," said Schiba.

Carefully supporting the wounded man, he placed him in a horizontal position; then, opening, by the aid of a poignard, his clenched teeth, he administered one drop of a red fluid contained in a flask he had placed on the table at the same time

with the writing case. Then he watched the sick man attentively. His countenance was cadaverous in its pallor, his eyes were staring widely open, looking dull and glazed.

"Ah! he is dying!" cried the young woman.

"No, no, mistress."

In truth this horrible crisis lasted only a moment, and soon the wounded man dropped into a deep sleep, as calm and peaceful as a child's.

"He will not die, mistress. I will answer for him."

CHAPTER XI.

CLOTILDE'S TEST.

Certain, having wounded George, of at least, six week's tranquillity, the marquis d'Aviella resolved to profit by them. Clotilde had promised to give him a definite answer at the Minister's ball, which would take place in a few days; but these few days seemed to Sanchez like so many centuries and in his fever and anxiety, he conceived a project, which according to his ideas, ought to hasten matters. The marchioness had very generously proposed to her son to assist him by asking the banker for his daughter's hand; but the young man had refused this proposition, not wishing to take such a very decided step until he had gained the assent of the girl he loved. On the other hand, Clotilde having given him a positive promise, he considered it imprudent to press her too much directly. What he required was the assistance of a third person in whom the young girl had unlimited confidence, and whose position would enable him to confide his secret to safely.

Madame de Lunéville, her godmother, united in herself all these qualities. The very evening of his duel with George, Sanchez presented himself at the hotel de Lunéville. The baroness held a private reception that night. The marquis arrived at nine o'clock. In addressing himself to Madame de Lunéville, with the view of enlisting her services as an ally, d'Aviella might have made a very serious mistake, for the baroness, as we know, had for some time past been dissuading Clotilde from any matrimonial project; but following the conversation in which Mademoiselle Schunberg had informed her father of the marquis' avowal to her, Isaac had held a serious consultation with Clotilde's godmother and ended by gaining her over to his wishes and disposing her in favor of Sanchez. She frankly espoused the cause of the marquis, and without knowing yet of the proposed departure of the banker and his daughter, welcomed d'Aviella in the most cordial manner.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this early arrival, Monsieur le Marquis?" said she holding out her hand to him.

"To the extreme pleasure I always take in talking with you, baroness," replied Sanchez; "then besides—"

"Ah! there is always a "then besides'?" I was sure of it. Must I come to your aid?"

"Why should you?"

"In explanation of that significant phrase."

"You foresee then what it meant?"

"I can even translate it in a few syllables. It has reference to my goddaughter, has it not?"

"Yes, madame. But how do you know?"

"Ah! that is my secret."

"Mademoiselle Clotilde—"

"Has not said a word to me. I can only assure you that you have a very good chance, and that I am quite ready to plead your cause."

"Ah! madame, how good you are?"

"Clotilde and her father are to be here to-night after they leave the opera; so you will have to languish until then."

The evening seemed interminable to Sanchez. He counted the minutes until the arrival of the banker and his daughter. After having bowed to Clotilde, who placed herself by the side of the baroness, he joined Schunberg, who had seated himself in a little boudoir.

The banker welcomed him with his usual cordiality. Sanchez was a favorite of his, and the marquis had no fear of meeting with any obstacle

from that quarter; but he was quite ignorant of the fact that Isaac's blind love for his daughter would make him leave her entire mistress of her own choice. The baroness profitted by the absence of the marquis to speak frankly to Clotilde. The manner with which her young favorite listened proved to Madame de Lunéville that her new protégé's cause was not yet completely gained.

"My father has allowed me a year to decide; until the expiration of that time, I do not wish to bind myself in any way."

"You are right; nevertheless, my dear Clotilde, the Marquis d'Aviella is a very charming young man."

"I agree with you that he has many good qualities, but marriage is such a serious step, that I ought to have time given me to reflect; do you not think so?"

"You do not love Monsieur d'Aviella then?"

"Not well enough yet."

"But what am I to say to him?"

"Nothing. I am putting him to a test; you will know all about it very soon."

"A secret?"

"Yes. A great project which I have conceived and which the marquis will not enjoy."

"Ah! And to what end, my darling?"

"If the marquis really loves me, let him prove it to me. Oh! I have reflected seriously about it, and my resolution is irrevocable."

"And can you not give me a little hint that will enlighten me regarding this terrible resolution of yours?"

"Have patience, dear baroness. But allow me to assume and keep up my most severe air. Here is Monsiuer d'Aviella. I must begin this very evening to prepare him for his trial and show him that whatever degree of affection he has for me, I consider he was in a little too great a hurry to confide in you."

"And why, my dear Clotilde?"

"For a very simple reason; the respect due to such sentiments. Perhaps I am carrying my delicacy on this point too far, but I am disappointed that Monsieur d'Aviella did not sympathize and feel as I did. I still hesitated before coming here, but now, this proceeding on his part has completely decided me."

"But about what, my sensitive little darling?"

"Hush! here is the marquis."

Sanchez approached them. The moment was a decisive one for him. He threw a questioning glance at Madame de Lunéville.

The interview was embarrassing. Sanchez saw that he had offended, and in vain searched his mind for the cause. He redoubled his attentions to Clotilde, who accepted his homage with marked coldness. When about to take leave of his hostess:

"What has happened, madame?" he demanded in an anxious undertone of the baroness.

In a few words Clotilde's godmother made him understand.

The situation was serious for Sanchez, but dread had made him anticipate so many things, that he was relieved and almost happy on learning the true motive of Mademoiselle Schunberg's coldness. He had, at first, imagined that she had not only heard of his duel with de Maurange, but, also, had divined the true cause. This supposition was, of course, unlikely, for every thing had combined to keep Clotilde in complete ignorance of the events of the day.

In the first place, the seconds had promised to keep secret on the subject of the duel; then, George was not intimate enough at the hotel de Lunèville to present himself at the private receptions; so no one would remark his absence. Clotilde less than any one else. These reflections passed quickly through the marquis' mind, and as soon as the

banker and his daughter had left, he tried to justify the young girl in his own eyes, which he very soon succeeded in doing to his entire satisfaction.

"Yes, she was right. I was in too great a hurry," he reflected; "her annoyance is due to my own stupidity. I was a fool to wish to force her consent when everything was proceeding so favorably and I had but a few short days to wait? Curse my impatience. Clotilde is right; she has acted wisely. Her heart is a sanctuary in which no profane gaze may penetrate. Thank you, Clotilde, you do well to punish me."

This monologue only took a few seconds to indulge in. All these consolatory reflections flashed like lightning on his mind.

The man who, a few hours before, had aimed at Goerge de Maurange's heart, with only murder in his thoughts, without compassion for his manly strength, youth, future, and for those who might be left to mourn his loss, the sombre visaged Sanchez had given place to the radiant Marquis d'Aviella. His look of confident happiness struck the Baroness de Lunèville.

"Consoled already, marquis?" she said.

"Consoled already! How? What do you mean?" retorted d'Aviella affecting astonishment.

"Why, the bad news I gave you!"

"Madame la Baroness, will you permit me to be perfectly frank with you?"

"I beg you will, marquis."

"Very well, then! In this particular case, do not question me any more."

"Ah!" said the baroness, slightly raising her eyebrows.

"I beg it as a favor. To-night I was guilty of a grave fault which I hope never to commit again. I am acting disgracefully, am I not, in asking you now not to occupy yourself any longer with my unworthy heart, when at its first appeal, you so graciously consented to second my dearest hopes; but be merciful, and without seeking to analyze my conduct, or guess the motives which actuate me, grant me what I ask in the name of the cordial kindness you have honored me with so far."

"The heart knoweth its own secrets," said the baroness; "from this moment I am oblivious of everything, and you must promise never to speak of Clotilde to me again."

"Thank you," said Sanchez, as he raised Madame de Lunéville's hand gratefully to his lips.

The following evening, he again saw Clotilde at the Italiens. Generally, an almost involuntary

sign, perceptible to him alone, made Sanchez understand that he was recognized. The marquis' stall was almost facing the banker's box. On the evening of which we speak, this mute call, this so ardently looked for a sign which the marquis never failed to discern with a delicate tact was now more than waited for; it was not given. They were singing "Le Barbier," and never had Clotilde listened to Patti with more rapt attention. Her eyes never wandered from the stage, but if they did abandon it for a moment, it was only to welcome some new visitor. During two acts of inordinate length to Sanchez, he did not once meet Clotilde's glance. He decided to go to Clotilde, since she would not deign even to throw a glance at him. He presented himself at the banker's box.

Durouget, d'Arthèville and a young fellow called Monsieur de Vardes, whose silly compliments were proverbial, were already installed near Isaac and his daughter. The latter had seen the marquis leave his place, heard the door open, and divining who had entered, took the lorgnette and without turning round, feigned to be engaged examining the fashionable toilettes of the ladies. Sanchez noticed this little maneuver, and after having bowed to Schunberg and shaken hands with his

seconds of the previous day, he waited patiently for the young girl to take some notice of his presence. Unconscious of the coquettish skirmish taking place at this moment, and attributing Clotilde's more than cool reception of his young friend to simple distraction, Isaac touched his daughter's arm. Her eyes met Sanchez's look of respectful reproach. They bowed, and Mademoiselle Schunberg, taking up her opera glass, continued her examination of the house. This conduct was very depressing to the marquis. He withdrew as quickly as he could without displaying any annoyance, leaving Clotilde to listen to the vapid compliments of Monsieur de Vardes.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEPARTURE.

The day of the Minister's ball, so impatiently waited for by Sanchez, at last arrived. In a great state of anxiety he went there. His fate would be decided now. One word was to transform his whole future life into long continued felicity, or render it forever desolate and hopeless. Like all minds occupied by one special idea, he had pictured in advance what would probably take place between Clotilde and himself. In advance he tasted the rapture of listening to her reply, for in spite of Clotilde's coldness during the last few days, it had not destroyed his hopes. And if a "yes" dropped from her lips, what unknown delight would follow! What perfect happiness! But nothing happened as the marquis had anticipated. Search as he did in all directions, there was no Mademoiselle Schunberg at the ball. Neither the banker nor his daughter made their appearance that night. To paint the chagrin of Sanchez would be impossible.

It was not until two o'clock in the morning that he was convinced it was useless to wait any longer, and that this night, so long and ardently desired, would not advance in any degree, his tender hopes.

Madame de Lunéville was present; but Sanchez dared not question her. He returned home a victim to bitter disappointment, and spent the whole night trying to explain what could be the cause of Monsieur Schunberg and his daughter's absence. At four o'clock the following day, not daring to go to the banker's, he presented himself at Madame de Lunéville's. Several people were there when the marquis entered. Recalling to his mind that he had formally promised not to ask for any intervention on the part of Clotilde's god-mother regarding his love affairs, he forced himself to meet her with as much calm indifference as he could call to his aid. He came there, not to question, but to listen, feeling assured that something serious had happened, and that he would be sure to hear of it. The entrance of the marquis having suspended the conversation for a moment, it was soon resumed in an indifferent and disjointed manner.

"Were you at the opera last night?"

"No, baroness," replied M. de Vardes, to whom the hostess had addressed this question.

"And you?"

"Nor I either. I stayed here too late. Brandus had sent me some new music, and I passed the greater part of the evening trying it over."

"Ah! why was I not there?" sighed Monsieur de Vardes.

Madame de Lunéville did not lift the perfumed gage thrown down by the foolish author of this compliment, but contented herself by acknowledging his gallant attack by a kind smile.

"Oh! I," said in her turn, a tall shrivelled looking countess with a skin like parchment, "I do not like the piano. I did play, at one time, when I was a little girl."

"She is mistaken, it must have been the harpsichord," murmured a young man in the marquis' ear.

"But I had to give it up; it prevented me from keeping my nails long, which spoiled the looks of my hands."

"A veritable vandalism, madame," said Monsieur de Vardes.

"Ah! my dear monsieur, you overwhelm me," cried the yellow beauty bashfully.

During this idle chit-chat, Sanchez suffered tortures.

He tried to relieve his feelings by crushing the glove he had taken off between his clenched hands. The baroness was watching him attentively, without, however, appearing to do so; but she did not deceive the marquis. He felt convinced that she had some important news to communicate, but what could it be?

"The opera is not my favorite place of amusement," went on the meagre countess. "French is a frightful language when sung; there is only one really melodious and musical tongue, Italian."

"Italian!" exclaimed the general, "do not speak of it; it is macaroni with sugar. I may listen, but I never understand a word these artists from Italy say."

"That arises, perhaps, from you not being very well versed in the language of Tasso and Petrarch, general," judiciously remarked M. de Vardes.

"What do you say?"

"That probably you do not know Italian very well," said the baroness, in order to save the old soldier from an imprudent reply.

"Italian? I do not know one treacherous word," answered he.

This confession made M. de Vardes smile in a superior manner.

I share the countess' opinion," said Madame de Lunéville. "I prefer the *Italiens* to the *opera*. And you, Monsieur le Marquis?" she added turning to Sanchez.

"I confess, Madame la Baroness, I have no preference."

Clotilde had a box in both theaters, and d'Aviella had an equal liking for every place in which he met her.

"Oh! I shall never forgive myself for not securing a box this season," said the countess. "I stayed very late in the country, and when I returned, they were all taken."

"That difficulty is removed now, countess; since yesterday there has been a box vacant, if not for the rest of the season, at last for six weeks or two months. The lessee has gone on a long journey."

"But would he consent during his absence—"

"To sublet it? Most certainly, and if you choose, I will secure it for you; he is a friend of mine, the banker, Monsieur Schunberg."

A thunderbolt falling at Sanchez's feet could not have given him a greater shock than the one he received on hearing this news. He turned ghastly pale, and after directing at the baroness a look which spoke volumes, and no longer able to restrain himself:

"Pardon me, general," said he, "but I think you labor under some error, for I saw Monsieur Schunberg in his box not three days ago; I went there to pay my respects to his daughter and neither of them said a word about leaving Paris."

"Neither did they to me, monsieur, though I was, also, their guest that evening. Nevertheless, yesterday, M. Schunberg and his daughter left Paris. I can answer for it, for I heard the news from Durouget himself, who told me this morning."

"Then of course you must be right, general."

"It is most astonishing, such a beautiful girl, and so much sought after as Mademoiselle Schunberg, to run away in the height of the season, it is most astonishing!" murmured M. de Vardes.

"What is?" demanded the marquis with a hardly repressed impatience.

"This departure, sir. We are not at the date when any one thinks of going away, but at the very time when every one is anxious, as a rule, to stay. Lose two months of the season, balls, fetes, theaters, pleasures of every kind—It is most astonishing."

With the exception of Sanchez and the baroness, the other persons joined in the chorus led by M. de Vardes, declaring that the journey was really incomprehensible.

Madame de Lunéville tried to explain.

"I cannot see anything so very extraordinary," said she. "No doubt, Monsieur Schunberg has been obliged to leave Paris unexpectedly on important business, which he alone could attend to, and my god-daughter's love for her father is well enough known to make it a very easy matter to determine why she accompanied him."

These words satisfied her visitors, but d'Aviella found them insufficient. His anxiety increased. Approaching the general, he said, drawing him aside:

"I have funds placed with Monsieur Schunberg, and I intended consulting him to-morrow about some business which I have on hand, his absence leaves me no other alternative but to write. Will you be kind enough to tell me where he has gone, general?"

"As to that, my dear sir, I am in total ignorance."

"You did not ask then?"

"It never occurred to me; and it appears that M. Schunberg did not tell any one."

While the general was speaking, Sanchez took a rapid view of the import this journey of the banker and his daughter had for him; he did not doubt, for one instant, that Mademoiselle Schun-

berg had only left Paris in order to avoid being under the obligation which she had taken on herself, to give him a definite answer at the Minister's ball.

At the first symptom of love, is joined that attraction of forbidden fruit, that irresistible temptation to which entire humanity yields more or less, since Eve, the first sinner. The marquis called his pride to his aid, so that not any of those present should guess the sorrow raging in his heart, and with a face of marble and a voice which he endeavored to render firm:

"It is strange," he said to the general; "evidently Monsieur Schunberg, tired with the rush of business, felt the need of perfect rest for a few weeks and the mystery enveloping his sudden flight is easily explained. Great financiers are continually harassed by a crowd of people who are attracted towards gold, as the needle towards the magnet, hoping by its mere contact, to carry away a few particles, however small."

"That is my opinion also, and the only probable reason for this journey," said the general.

The general returned to his place. During all these proceedings, the baroness had secretly kept a watch over Sanchez's movements. The appar-

ent calm of the young man did not deceive her. Besides, as an intoxicated person will make a thousand efforts to preserve his equilibrium, he made an effort and from that moment, joined with feverish gayety in the conversation, until the other visitors, having taken leave of Madame de Lunéville, he found himself alone with Clotilde's godmother. Monsieur de Vardes was the last to leave and scarcely had he disappeared, when throwing aside all restraint, Sanchez said:

"What is the meaning of this departure? Ah! madame, I am thoroughly unhappy. Have pity and tell me where they have gone? You must know. She does not love me then?—Oh! it is horrible!—But it does not matter; if this terrible supposition proves correct, tell me; I would bear anything rather than this cruel suspense which is eating into my heart."

Madame de Lunéville was touched by this great love.

"Don't allow yourself to despair," she said.

"You do not understand then?" interrupted Sanchez. "She has left without giving me an answer."

"I know it."

"But where have they gone? Will you not tell me?"

"I do not know!"

"You also?" said Sanchez doubtingly.

"I will swear it, if you wish."

"Ah! what is to become of me?"

"Come now, let us sit down and reason calmly. If Clotilde had decided to break with you completely, what was there to prevent her telling you so frankly?"

"She was afraid I might reproach her."

"Monsieur d'Aviella, I am a woman, and I must tell you frankly that such a fear rarely has any weight with us. Full of abnegation, pity, kindness, and admiration for the one we love, we are coldly cruel to the one we are indifferent to. Women divide lovers into two distinct classes; ideals and slaves. The first are our masters; we are proud to serve them; the second seem to be created simply to endure our caprices. No delicacy of feeling is ever wasted on these; plain speaking is honor enough for them. In Clotilde's eyes, you have only sinned by being too importunate a lover."

"If she loved me, she would not have fled from me in this way."

"She has only done so, perhaps, with the purpose of being able to repay you when she returns."

"Your efforts to comfort me are thrown away."

madame! Ah! she has acted cruelly. Has she no heart?"

"No heart! Clotilde? That is a strange accusation. I assure you she has, and a very kind one."

"Why did she not take into consideration the terrible grief she causes me, by going away just now?"

"Monsieur le Marquis, my god-daughter is not an ordinary woman. If she should ever say "yes" it will be with all her heart and soul, and that word has so much importance in her eyes, that she will not pronounce it until she finds great happiness in saying so. In your place, I would hope so, for this departure is only, perhaps, to put you and herself to a test. She wishes to ask herself in peace and at a distance, if she really loves you."

"And find out on her return if I really love her?" cried the marquis, his eyes brightening at the words.

"That is it?"

"Ah!" said Sanchez, hope arising with him once more. "My God, if this be true, I would be the happiest man on earth."

Then rising he said gayly:

"Adieu. Adieu, baroness."

"Where are you going?"

"I am going away also."

"But where?"

"I do not know, but I must find Clotilde."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHERE DUROUGET BECOMES IMPENETRABLE.

The marquis hastily left Madame de Lunéville without waiting to hear the numerous objections she was preparing to offer to his new project. When his first enthusiasm had cooled down, Sanchez found himself at a loss how to act. Without the slightest indication as to the course they had taken, it was hardly possible to join Monsieur Schunberg and his daughter. But love laughs at obstacles. A man whose heart is full of this divine strength, believes himself capable of Herculean tasks.

After having feared the loss of Clotilde's heart, and dreaded having to renounce all claim to her hand forever, the marquis experienced this illusion, as soon as he seized the true meaning of Madame de Lunéville's words.

"I shall go and join them," he had declared with perfect sincerity; but very soon cold reason exposed to his view the many obstacles he would have to overcome, and he began to consider

seriously what means to employ in order to discover in what direction Clotilde and her father had gone.

On his return home, Sanchez, anxious to be alone, did not go to see the marchioness, but shut himself up in a room on the ground floor which served him as smoking room and library. It was a small apartment, carpeted with cardova leather of a dark color, with wide stripes of gold and silver. Two cabinets almost covered the two largest panels, one containing cigars of the choicest brands, the other enclosing a collection of French, Spanish and Portuguese books. The marquis threw himself in a large arm-chair before a fire place in which a great log was blazing and then calmly put this question to himself:

"How can I manage to join them?"

His hesitation was not of long duration; he recalled certain words of the general's and presuming that Durouget alone could tell him, he rang for Gomez.

The latter soon appeared.

"Have they taken the horses out of the carriage?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis. Manoel has just taken them to the stables."

"Well, tell him to put them into the carriage again."

"Very well, Monsieur le Marquis," the steward contented himself with saying, and disappeared.

"Yes, that is the best thing to be done," said Sanchez to himself, when he was once more alone.

"Not suspecting that I have anything to do with Schunberg and his daughter, Durouget will never hesitate to reveal their retreat to me. I will say to her I divined your thoughts, you fled in order to put my heart to a fresh proof, to test it by your absence. Here I am, do not doubt me longer, for away from you, this tired heart would have soon ceased to beat, I would have sought relief in death."

An hour later, the marquis knocked at the office door of the head cashier of the house of Schunberg & Co., who welcomed him with his usual gayety.

"Ah! how are you, marquis, to what fortunate chance do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"I should like to speak to Monsieur Schunberg."

"Impossible."

"Then what I have heard is true?"

"What did you hear?"

"That Monsieur Schunberg left Paris yesterday."

"Your information was quite correct."

"Ah!" said d'Aviella, assuming as well as he could a look of extreme annoyance.

"But," continued Duroget, "if it is on business, you can address yourself to me. When he left, Monsieur Schunberg invested me with full powers to act for him, as he always does when obliged to leave Paris."

"Unfortunately, it is a special affair, altogether confidential, which I can only confide to Monsieur Schunberg himself. Will he be away for any length of time?"

"For about six weeks, or perhaps two months. If you are in a hurry, why not write to him?"

"I was thinking of that," said Sanchez, delighted at this proposition. "To where must I address my letter?"

"Here; I will see that it is forwarded without delay."

"You need not give yourself all this trouble, my dear Duroget; it will take up too much of your valuable time. Give me Monsieur Scuhnberg's address; that will be the simplest way."

"I cannot."

"Cannot!" said the marquis feigning astonishment. "Why? do you not know it?"

"I know it, but on leaving Paris, Monsieur Schunberg forbade me to give it to any one whatever."

"There are some exceptions though, I suppose?"

"Not one, my dear marquis, not even in your favor."

"You are, I am sure, taking his order too literally, my dear fellow; be assured that I shall not abuse your confidence, and since there is some little mystery existing, however unimportant it may be, I promise it shall not go any further."

"I do not doubt it for a moment; but my instructions are decisive, and I am not in the habit of infringing them. If you are in a hurry, here is pen and ink; take a seat there; your letter will be forwarded this very evening."

"Come, my dear Duroget," said Sanchez, "you carry your respect for your chief's wishes a little too far; tell me what I ask, Monsieur Schunberg will not blame you, you may be convinced of it."

"Spare me the pain of refusing you a second time."

"I shall not insist any more, then, but I shall not write here; I have to refer to some notes which I left at home. Nevertheless, as it concerns some advice on a matter of importance, I will first go to my lawyer's, perhaps he will be able to do instead of Monsieur Schunberg. If his assistance is not sufficient, I shall write, and ask you to forward my letter."

"It will go immediately, I promise you. Sorry to have had to refuse you, marquis. Good bye."

"Good bye," replied Sanchez, who went out cursing Duroget's scruples, and quite at a loss as to what his next step was to be.

At the moment, when out of spirits and discouraged, he was re-entering his hotel, Manoel held out a silver tray on which lay a letter. Sanchez took it absently and went into the smoking room. An instant afterwards his bell rang violently for Gomez. The steward quickly entered.

"We are going away within an hour, Gomez; get ready."

"Where are we going, sir?"

"To Italy; lose no time."

Manoel had been listening. As soon as he heard these words, he left the hotel and hastened to a coupé waiting at the corner of the Rue de l'Université and du Bac. This carriage contained two persons, an old man with a red beard and a veiled woman.

"Well?" said the old man to Manoel.

"I gave him the letter and he leaves in an hour."

"Here is what I promised you," said the old man handing a well filled purse to the negro.

The carriage drove away.

The letter handed by Manoel to Sanchez was anonymous, and contained only these words:

"Clotilde is in Rome."

The old man was Schiba, the veiled woman the unknown whom the old Indian called "mistress."

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME INDISPENSABLE EXPLANATIONS.

Several parts in this story require explanation. We are now going to fill up these gaps, so as to avoid any appearance of improbability. And, in the first place, let us at once proceed to elucidate, namely, how the unknown had heard of the projected duel between the marquis and George, and how she had been able to gather such precise information regarding the latter, as enabled her to make him the singular offer of purchasing his adversary's life. Let us begin at this last point.

Ever since he came to live in Paris, all Sanchez's movements had been watched; Madame Firmin, without being directly commissioned to act the spy on the young Brazilian, was an invaluable aid to those whom Schiba had charged never to allow the marquis out of their sight. Clotilde's governess had been gained over by the old man as soon as the marquis, by his frequent visits to the house, had shown what a powerful interest attracted him

there. The spies of the unknown soon discovered that they were not the only ones who were interested in the movements of the marquis, and George de Maurange's valet put them on his master's traces. And now, all the unknown's attention was centered, for the moment, on de Maurange. She left for Poitiers, found the lawyer employed by the de Maurange family, spoke in vague terms of a marriage, and under this pretext, obtained all the information desired.

The de Maurange property had been the last which George had sold. The lawyer told this to his strange visitor. George placed a great value on this patrimonial estate, which the new proprietor had again put up for sale. George had been informed of this, but had not made any offer for the property. The details given by Clotilde to Madame Firmin, about the disposition of her admirer, and repeated by the governess to the interested parties, enabled them to thoroughly analyse the young man's conduct, certain, as they very soon were, that the question of money could not be a matter of indifference in the love he professed for Mademoiselle Schunberg. They resolved to make him their principal auxiliary in the plot they were hatching against the marquis, and only waited

for a favorable opportunity to assure themselves of the entire co-operation of Sanchez's rival.

The marquis' quarrel with George secured this. The scene which took place in Madame de Lunéville's boudoir when the marquis and George arranged to provoke a quarrel at the club, had been overheard. If de Maurange, on leaving the room, had turned round, he would have seen a curtain put aside and an individual appear, known in the Parisian salons as "Sir William Perkins," a very wealthy old Englishman, it was commonly reported. Sir William Perkins was none other than Schiba. No one, however, in the Englishman's features, could have recognized the old khansaman. Well dressed, his white hair hidden under a light red wig, and disguising by the aid of an ingenious dye, his silver beard, he completed his transformation by using a wash which whitened his skin, and added a bright red tint to his cheeks. Thus disguised, he had the appearance of a harmless old fellow of fifty.

No one knew exactly how he had gained admittance into Parisian salons, and no one, to tell the truth, took the trouble to enquire. The foreigner indulged in a certain amount of luxury, very reassuring to the people with whom he came in contact.

At times, he was to be seen in the Bois in a perfectly appointed brougham; it did not require more to satisfy the curious, and he passed in a general way, for a wealthy merchant who had made his fortune in India.

On the morning of the day of the banker's departure, Madame Firmin drove to the villa at Neuilly. The mistress of the house was expecting her visit, a note from the governess, posted on the previous evening, having prepared her for it.

"We leave to-morrow. I do not yet know where we are going, but in the morning, I shall find out, and see you about noon."

In order to keep this promise, the worthy governess was more than usually submissive and sweet in her manner to Clotilde the next morning.

"You see," said the young girl, "I have gained my cause. My father has consented, and we are going away to-day. Ah! I am so happy."

"I understand how you must feel, mademoiselle."

"Well then, pack up quickly. Charlotte must help me to dress. How delightful it is to travel! To run away from Paris with its rain and fogs to a country with a brilliant sunshine and a pure sky."

"Where can we be going to, then?"

"Why to Italy, Madame Firmin."

"To Venice?"

"Better than that, to Rome. I have been reading "Corinne" all night. I can imagine myself in the Forum or at Saint Peter's, the most imposing building in the world, according to Madame de Stael."

"But are you not sorry for the suffering this departure will cause some one?" the companion ventured to observe.

"Ah! that is just like my father. You are sorry for the marquis?"

"If he really loves you, mademoiselle, it will break his heart."

"If he loves me, yes; but also, all the more joy when I return."

"It is not then to get rid of him, that you have determined on this trip?"

"Ah! how incapable you are of reading my heart."

"I do not understand."

"Yet it is simple enough! If the marquis really loves me, he will not forget me before my return; that is all I wish to know."

"And then—"

"How inquisitive you are. Yet I do not mind telling you; then I shall think him worthy of my trust."

"And you will say yes?"

"Without hesitation—But time is passing; go, go and get ready, dear madame."

Possessed of all necessary information, the governess obeyed with alacrity. She soon completed her preparations and hurried off to Neuilly.

"Where are you going to?" demanded the unknown, who had been anxiously waiting for her.

"To Rome, madame."

"And you leave?"

"This evening."

"Then mademoiselle does not love the marquis?"

"Yes, she does; his cause is gained if he wishes it."

"What must he do to gain it, do you think?"

"Not forget his ladylove during her absence."

"He will do what is even better."

"What may that be?"

"Excuse me!" said the young woman haughtily, "do you question me?"

Madame Firmin bent her head by way of apology. The wealthy unknown placed her hand on the silver bell and rung it. Schiba appeared.

"Hand a thousand francs to madame," said his mistress.

"Oh! it is too much, madame!" the governess

objected, as a slight salve to her conscience.

"No, no, and it is only on account," continued the young woman, "for I expect you to keep me well informed of all that takes place during this absence."

"Madame knows my devotion and zeal."

"Yes, but it is desirable to stimulate them, however satisfactory they may have been so far."

"I promise to merit your confidence."

"I count upon it; you can leave me now."

Madame Firmin obeyed, followed by Schiba, who returned a few minutes later.

"She loves him!" explained the young woman as the khansaman re-appeared. "She loves him, Schiba! We are sure of our vengeance. This departure is merely to put him to the test; but I am weary of waiting, and mean to hasten matters. Clotilde and her father leave this evening for Italy; the marquis must follow them. In a month they will be married, and in six months, our task will be ended."

"May the spirit of Boxio aid us!" said the old Indian, "and may Vishna inspire us!"

"This sudden departure will plunge that accursed one in the greatest anxiety; it must not last more than twenty-four hours. An anonymous letter

will tell him everything, and he will hasten to join Clotilde."

"We are going to make him very happy, mistress."

"Yes, but only to make him suffer more afterwards."

"That is true," said Schiba.

"You will write a little note, telling him where Clotilde is, and post it to-night."

"You forget, mistress, that we have some one to win over to our side at the d'Aviella hotel."

"You are right. You mean that negro Manoel?"

"Yes. I will manage that. To-morrow."

"I leave everything to you then."

The following afternoon, about three o'clock, Schiba and the unknown seated themselves in a coupé. The khansaman had again become the wealthy and eccentric Englishman. Their carriage entered the Grande Avenue which leads from the Pont de Neuilly to the Place de la Concorde; on arriving there it crossed the bridge, then the Rue de Bourgoyne, and stopped at the corner of the Rue du Bac.

Sir William Perkins descended and calling a commissioner, gave him an order in a marked English accent to go to the hotel d'Aviella, ask

for the negro Manoel and tell him that some one wished to speak to him.

A quarter of an hour afterwards, the marquis' groom arrived. Sir William had reseated himself in the carriage.

"There he is, mistress," said he.

"Go, go, Schiba. I do not wish him to see me."

The pretended Englishman descended and advanced a few steps to meet the negro.

"I wish to send this letter to your master," he said.

Manoel looked at the foreigner, and satisfied with the appearance of apparent wealth, replied:

"That will be easy."

"Very well. You seem an intelligent fellow, or I am very much mistaken."

"I do my best," said Manoel modestly, in whom, since his conversation with Charles, the spirit of intrigue had suddenly developed.

"Listen then."

"Yes, sir."

"The marquis must not know who gave you this letter."

"Very well, sir."

"And more, you must manage to let me know what effect it produces on him. If you succeed, this purse is yours."

Manoel scented the gold which was held out to him, as a hunting dog scents a trail.

"You will be satisfied, my lord," said he, "I promise you."

"And now, Schiba, what is the next thing to be done?" demanded the young woman.

"Wait, mistress."

"Will you see Manoel again? Have you asked him to meet you?"

"We can always find him, mistress; for the moment, he can be of no use to us; but to judge from the manner in which he has acquitted himself of this first commission, I will answer for his capabilities in the future. Let us return home and devote our attention to the wounded man.

The unknown agreed to this, and half an hour later, she and Schiba entered the room where George de Maurange was still a prisoner in bed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PURSUIT.

Isaac had requested his correspondent at Rome to choose a suitable house for him.

On their arrival they found that a delightful villa had been secured near Albano, on the banks of Lake Nemi. Six days after leaving Paris they reached their destination. Clotilde was enchanted with the journey. She had been as gay and happy as a child, her surprise and delight far exceeding anything she had anticipated.

But what gave her most pleasure, was the appearance of this new dwelling.

Imagine a house situated on the slope of a hill, open to the refreshing breezes on the north side, sheltered on the south by large olive trees. Steps of white marble led to a large hall paved with ingenious taste in mosaic and marble. Large, bright, sunshiny rooms filled up the two upper landings; all furnished not only with an eye to appearance, but replete with every luxury and comfort.

Surrounding this inviting retreat, was a large garden, through which flowed two limpid, silvery streams. To complete this entrancing picture, a sanded walk, bordered on each side by lilacs and rose bushes led to a grove of beech trees, under which a bench and rustic seats invited the visitor to repose and gentle talk. Lower down, lay the calm lake, and in the distance, the imposing Campagna of Rome, bristling with secular ruins, which seemed, when the moon alone lighted up the horizon, like giant phantoms of the past.

Clotilde visited all with eager curiosity and delight, and an always increasing admiration. The charm and grandeur reigning around, gave her the opportunity she so desired of questioning her heart at leisure.

Like a veritable despot, she chose her bedroom and the one which henceforth must serve as a boudoir, her solitary corner for reflection in the garden, and as usual, all her plans met with the complete approval of her father.

The banker's correspondent had accompanied father and daughter when they went to take possession. His name was Baron Pazzi.

"Are you satisfied, mademoiselle?" he said to Clotilde when showing her and her father over the villa.

"I am perfectly enchanted, Baron Pazzi. I could not have dreamed of anything to surpass this."

"I am delighted you are pleased; for I confess I was afraid that the loneliness of this place would not suit your Parisian tastes."

"It is just this isolation which charms me. I am in favor of extremes. Here, I will really feel myself far away from France; forget the cold and the snow of Paris; the balls, theaters, in fact, the whole monotonous round of our fashionable, worldly existence, and taste the most poetical and complete calm that can be imagined. Thank you a thousand times, Baron Pazzi."

"I hope, however, you do not intend leading a strictly retired life?"

"No, indeed; accustomed as he is to an extremely active life, my father would find it difficult to condemn himself to such solitude. Reassure yourself. We are ambitious to see Rome, your patrician society, which inspires me for my part, with intense interest; but all that will not prevent us from thoroughly appreciating the quiet and repose of this delightful spot."

"Do you share mademoiselle's opinion, monsieur?"

"Completely, my dear baron."

"Thank you, my dear father," said Clotilde, comprehending on the instant all the affectionate delicacy of feeling contained in this answer.

While this conversation was taking place in the garden, Madame Firmin was superintending the removal of the luggage to the villa, and busied in trying to render it conveniently habitable. When the baron had left them, Isaac broke the seal of a letter which he had found waiting for him at Rome. It was from Durouget. Without knowing precisely all that had passed between Mademoiselle Schunberg and the Marquis d'Aviella, Durouget had some notion of it after what his chief had confided to him on leaving.

"I leave for Rome, my dear Lucien," he said. "Clotilde insists on it, and you know I am too fond of her to deny her anything."

"I know, Monsieur Schunberg, that you are the most indulgent father in the world."

"Listen now, my dear fellow, "I am going to trust you in a matter which might be extremely serious were you different from what you are, but I know I can count upon you as on myself."

"You will never have reason to doubt that, I think."

"As you are doubtless aware, I have no business that requires my presence in Rome?"

"Yes, and I have vainly tried to explain to myself the cause of this journey."

"I am merely yielding to my daughter's wishes. She wishes it, for reasons known to myself and difficult to explain, but I do not wish any one to know where we have gone. I shall be absent six weeks or perhaps two months. You alone are to be entrusted with our address."

"I shall be careful to attend to your wishes in that respect."

"We understand each other perfectly, then?"

"Perfectly."

"As soon as we arrive, I shall forward our address. Keep me informed about every detail, for you know I have a mania for knowing the outs and ins of everything. Apart from this, act for me as you think best, you will always do well, and I have the greatest confidence in your ability; but once more, let no one know of our retreat, you understand, Lucien, it is Clotilde's desire."

On receiving, the day following this conversation, the marquis' visit, Durouget, who was no fool, concluded that Sanchez was not ignorant of the resolution adopted by Isaac and his daughter, so his letter, after giving some details of the business, ended by giving a full account of the attempt made

by d'Aviella to discover Monsieur Schunberg's address.

"Ah!" said Isaac, as he read the letter, "he has not wasted much time."

Who are you alluding to, father?" asked Clotilde.

"To your marquis. Here, read for yourself."

The girl took the letter and read it with an interest she did not attempt to conceal.

"I hope he was sufficiently eager!" said the banker; "believe me, Clotilde, this young man loves you sincerely, and very soon you will be a marchioness."

"You judge of others by yourself, dear father. We shall see whether this wonderful ardor on the part of Monsieur d'Aviella is more than a sudden flash."

"Then you remain implacable?"

"No, but my resolution is unalterable."

"It saddens you, however, I have noticed that much."

"What could have led you to suppose such a thing?"

"The profound reveries you fell into, in spite of the pleasure you seemed to take in this trip. During our drive here, I noticed it, and left you to the indulgence of your long spells of silence. I

watched you and your thoughts were far away, Clotilde, that is to say, in Paris, with the Marquis d'Aviella."

"Well, it is true, father; but is not this sentiment quite natural"?

"So natural, my child, that far from blaming you it fills my heart with happiness."

The father and daughter continued their conversation for some time and then separated. The next day, at day break, Madame Firmin went to Rome. She had a letter to post addressed to Sir W. Perkins, and also to ask at the office for one she expected from the mysterious companion of the pretended Englishman.

Madame Firmin, so as not to fail in her engagement with the unknown to furnish her with information, had related at length the different events relative to this journey, as well as their installation at Lake Nemi, adding fragments of conversation she had overheard between Schunberg and his daughter. When she arrived at the *Poste Restante* the employé handed her a letter. It announced the approaching arrival of the Marquis d'Aviella at Rome, and ordered her to write to the Englishman as soon as Sanchez had joined Clotilde, and to keep them informed of the consequences following

his appearance. The governess reopened her letter, and reiterated in a postscript, protestations of her entire devotion, and then returned to the villa.

Nothing particular happened on the second day Schunberg and his daughter passed in Italy. Clotilde congratulated herself on having carried her plans into execution. She was pleased with the test she had imposed on the marquis, and although not avowing it completely, even to herself, in her heart she never doubted for an instant, but that Sanchez would come out victorious.

The evident happiness of the young girl, rendered Isaac radiant. Then the rest he enjoyed offered a double charm to him, in relieving him from the worry of business, and permitting him to consecrate himself exclusively to Clotilde. Baron Pazzi came to ask them to drive over with him to his palace, and the day passed in a delightful manner for all.

From that day, Schunberg and his daughter concluded that their voluntary exile would prove a success. They made an engagement to meet the baron on the following day. One hour before the time appointed, Schunberg entered his daughter's room, and asked her to go down to the salon.

"The person we expected has arrived, come with me, my child," he said to her.

"Already! So much the better," replied Clotilde gayly, descending quickly to the salon, but instead of finding the Baron Pazzi, as she expected, she could hardly restrain a cry when she saw Sanchez standing before her.

"You, Monsieur le Marquis!"

D'Aviella was very pale; his features betrayed the emotion he felt.

"Yes," said he after an instant's pause; "it is I, who driven almost mad at your sudden flight, I who will die at your feet," he added kneeling down, "if you will not be my wife."

The noble, earnest manner of Sanchez, appealed to Clotilde's heart. A glance at her father showed her that he was ready to espouse the marquis' cause.

"Have pity and answer me," Sanchez continued, "I have your father's consent, are you still going to keep me waiting for yours?"

"No, I love you," said Clotilde frankly and sincerely.

"Ah! thank God! and you, who make me happy forever by saying so," cried Sanchez standing up, "dear Clotilde."

And seizing the young girl's hand, he kissed it ardently.

"She is yours," said the banker, "embrace her, I permit it."

Then trembling with happiness, his heart overflowing with joy, Sanchez embraced his betrothed for the first time. When their first strong emotion had passed away, Isaac continued:

"This happiness you spoke of a moment ago, must be your work, Monsieur le Marquis. It is an angel I am giving you, for she is as good as she is beautiful."

"I know it; and it is not only love I feel for her, Monsieur Schunberg, but adoration."

Before this scene a decisive explanation had taken place between the marquis and Isaac. As soon as Sanchez had become acquainted with Clotilde's place of retreat, he resolved to join her and immediately conceived a plan which he promptly put into execution. He told everything to the marchioness, his mother, and asked her to write to Monsieur Schunberg formally demanding his daughter's hand. That over, he found out Durouget, from whom he got a letter of credit for ten thousand francs, made payable at all the towns where Schunberg had correspondents. As soon as

he arrived in Rome, he went to Baron Pazzi, and through him, got Isaac's address.

A few hours later, Sanchez arrived at the villa of Lake Nemi.

Received by Madame Firmin, who had been on the lookout for him, he asked her to inform Monsieur Schunberg of his arrival. The governess immediately carried the marquis' card to the banker, who, on seeing it, could not repress a movement of joyful surprise.

"He!" murmured the old man. "He loves her even more than I thought."

"My presence here must surprise you, Monsieur Schunberg?" d'Aviella said, "but I will explain in a very few words. I love your daughter, and come here expressly to ask you for her hand in marriage."

"I know everything, Monsieur le Marquis; you have done well to come. But how did you discover our retreat?"

"Permit me to defer that recital until later, Monsieur Schunberg; for the moment, a much graver subject occupies my thoughts to such an extent, that I shall be grateful if you will allow me to introduce it at once. Here is a letter from my mother; she will confirm and reiterate to you the

demand I have just had the honor to address to you."

Isaac took the letter that the marquis held out to him; but without reading it, replied:

"My dear marquis, I feel honored by the demand your mother and you have just addressed to me. For my part, I welcome the idea with pleasure, and will be happy and proud to call you my son."

"But Mademoiselle Clotilde?"

"I will go to her; she will answer for herself."

Isaac left the room as he said these words and we have seen how Clotilde surpassed all the brightest hopes d'Aviella had cherished. From that moment, Clotilde felt all her indefinable apprehensions disappear as if by magic, and abandoned herself completely to the sentiment that she had fought against until then by banishing from her mind the remembrance of George's warning.

Sanchez installed himself at the Baron Pazzi's, to whom Schunberg introduced him as his future son-in-law, and after having passed a happy fortnight at Rome, the banker, d'Aviella and Clotilde returned to Paris, to make preparations for the marriage of the two young people. Madame Firmin had written everything to Sir William Perkins, and when she left Rome with her employers, felt

persuaded that a large recompense awaited her at Neuilly.

persuaded that a large recompense awaited her at
Nemely.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SLAP IN THE FACE.

Very soon after Schunberg's return, the approaching marriage of the marquis to his daughter was not a secret for any one. He announced it formally during a brilliant entertainment given for the occasion. This news, without producing any great astonishment in the fashionable world, caused a great deal of interest.

The Marquis d'Aviella's position, Clotilde's beauty and fortune, justified this feeling. Eight days before the one fixed for the celebration, Madame de Lunéville invited all the fashionable world of Paris to a masked ball. This fete was given for the future bride and bridegroom by Clotilde's god-mother. The preparations for the ball brought into request all that Paris contained that was illustrious and elegant. The leading dress-makers had to double the number of their assistants for several days. In order to add to the piquancy of the occasion, the invitation cards bore the re-

quest that the maskers would retain their disguise until three o'clock in the morning. Every one applauded the idea, which would naturally lead to endless intrigues, and promised to contribute great animation to this aristocratic reunion.

At eleven o'clock, on the date indicated, the vast salons of the hotel de Lunéville began to fill. A supplementary room had been constructed in the garden. It was in moorish style, variegated with brilliant tints, the effect being heightened by clumps of tropic plants. Three large salons gave access to this vast room where the waxed floor was waiting for the dancers. A profusion of large mirrors covered all that had not been invaded by ornaments, and the orchestra concealed behind the heavy foliage filled the air with inviting strains.

Madame de Lunéville wore the costume of a sultana. In her quality of hostess she did not wear any disguise, but a mask of purple silk was embroidered on the sleeve of her dress. Sanchez arrived with Schunberg and his daughter. The marquis wore a Henri III costume of somber hue which became him admirably and added to the noble yet rather romantic character of his appearance. Clotilde had chosen to appear as the "Marguerite" of Goethe. Never had she looked more

radiantly beautiful. The simplicity of her costume showed to advantage all the charms of her girlish beauty, making men envious of the happiness in store for Sanchez. Schunberg contented himself with wearing a venetian domino. Durouget strutted about as Punchinello in silk embroidered with silver. D'Arthéville, dressed as Scapier replied to his merry quips, with great success.

They both came up to Sanchez, whom they had not seen since the official announcement of his approaching marriage with Mademoiselle Schunberg and took this opportunity of congratulating him warmly.

D'Aviella thanked them with effusion. He felt his heart overflowing with happiness, and never wearied of watching his beautiful betrothed. Clotilde, also happy, was proud of her lover's happiness. Sanchez could not bear to leave her. She had to exert all the authority of a passionately loved woman, in order that her future husband should consent to dance with any other than herself, and permit her to accept a few of the invitations which overwhelmed her on all sides. Yet d'Aviella did not feel jealous. Since the disappearance of de Maurange this terrible feeling had not entered into his heart. He had unlimited faith

in Clotilde, but withal he thirsted for her presence. In spite of this, he yielded to his fiancé's desire, left her to her partner and mingled with the groups of maskers in the salons.

Among these were a rather odd looking couple who never left each other one minute. They were a man and woman, both masked with more than ordinary care, as if, above all things, they were anxious to avoid recognition. The woman, who appeared young and beautiful, to judge from her abundant black hair and ivory teeth, wore the costume of a magician, composed of a long, black velvet robe, studded with stars of gold and bordered with cabalistic signs of different colors. The head-dress was still more enriched by diamonds of great value. She wore white gloves also adorned with cabalistic signs similar to those on her robe. The man who accompanied her was dressed as a Sepoy chief, with a dagger on one side of his belt, and a short sword on the other. A mask, with a long beard descending to his breast, completely concealed his face and natural beard. These two mysterious masks walked about a long time as if in search of some one, and at last came to a stop before Clotilde, whose last partner had just reconducted her to her place near Madame de Lunéville, when the man said in a low voice:

"There she is, look!"

"How beautiful she is!" said the young woman; then, as in explanation of her thoughts, she said:

"Poor child!"

"What! you pity her?"

"But just look at her, she is an angel!"

"You admire her? That is still a step further than pity!" murmured the man, never raising his voice. "Do you mean to draw back?"

"No. But let us find some other means."

"Ah! that is how you forget your oath."

"Hush! for mercy's sake."

"No. I must not. What did you swear to the master?"

"Don't recall it; the sight of this young and innocent girl makes my heart ache."

"What did you swear?"

"You are cruel!"

"I watch over and give you courage."

"I shall have enough, never fear; I will *keep* my oath."

"Let us find the other; the sight of him will chase away your last scruples."

During this time, Sanchez was talking to Schunberg and the Marchioness d'Aviella, in the little boudoir where he had provoked a quarrel with George de Maurange a month before.

"You are bestowing a treasure on him, Monsieur Schunberg," said Madame d'Aviella.

"And I give it to him without fear," replied the banker smiling.

"Ah! monsieur," said Sanchez gratefully.

"Call me father, if you choose, since in a very few days you will be my son, Sanchez."

"With all my heart, father," replied the marquis pressing the banker's hand affectionately. "Ah! I owe my whole happiness in life to you."

"Yet it seems to me, Sanchez, that Clotilde will count for something in your felicity," replied the banker.

"I will pass my life at her feet to repay her for it. Ah! let me open my heart to you both, for before her, I dare not display the strength of my feeling; I am afraid of startling her; for my real life only began the day you gave her to me in Rome. It seems to me as if that had only happened yesterday, the hours have fled so quickly, and yet I have experienced such joy and happiness since that happy moment, that it seems to me as if I had lived two lives since then."

"Control yourself, Sanchez," interrupted the marchioness smiling benevolently.

"Let him speak, madame," said Schunberg, "his

words are pledges in favor of Clotilde's happiness."

This conversation would have lasted some time yet, had not Sanchez been seized with a longing desire to exchange one word with Clotilde. She had promised to waltz with him and the first strains of this so much desired waltz would soon be heard.

"I must leave you now, mother," he said.

"Where are you going, Sanchez?"

"To be near her; this is my dance."

A few minutes later, the dance began. Scarcely had the opening bars been played by the orchestra, when Sanchez was at Clotilde's side. She welcomed him with a smile which rewarded him a thousand times for his long wait.

"At last!" said Sanchez.

The waltz is the dance which suits all tender and impassioned hearts best. The music of this particular one was dreamy and inspiring and its exquisite melody was fitted to awaken the softest illusions and most alluring hopes. Clotilde and Sanchez, yielding themselves to its enchanting strains, waltzed past the circle of dancers, and isolated in the midst of the crowd, forgetful of all but themselves; were only conscious of the delight of being together, never for one moment, sup-

posing that they were the objects of searching examination to others.

Yet two persons never ceased watching them. These were the magician and her companion. A slight tremble of the woman's arm had warned the latter that she had just perceived the marquis.

"Where is he?" demanded the Sepoy in a low voice.

"There, there, right before us!"

And darting a flaming glance at Sanchez, she glared at him with a look of terrible hatred.

"Well! said the Sepoy, after a moment's expressive silence, "do you still hesitate? Has the sight of that wretch's unalloyed happiness not the power to revive your wavering hatred?"

"Oh! yes, you are right. Never for six years have I been so near him. He is happy, very happy; my vengeance will only be the more complete. But when shall we strike the blow?"

"Patience! the moment approaches. See how he seems to shelter her under his gaze; with what respectful passion he holds her in his arms; the day we strike, he will go raving mad!"

"But she," said once more the magician.

"Her! you ought to hate her also, since he loves her."

"Your plan is a hellish one, Schiba."

"It was thus that the master wished to revenge himself on Sir Edgar, had we been able to find him. We must be without pity for our enemies."

"They have stopped," said the magician still watching Sanchez.

Just then another dancer came up to Clotilde and offered her his arm.

She accepted it, and left her fiancé.

"Leave me!" said the unknown to Schiba.

"What are you going to do?"

"See him a little closer just for one moment. I will rejoin you."

Saying these words, the magician took her hand away from the old Indian's arm, and placed herself in Sanchez's way. The glance she directed at him surprised the marquis, who read so much concentrated anger and hatred in the eyes gazing at him from behind this black mask. He stopped in sudden bewilderment and stood rooted to the ground as if fascinated. He then conceived a desire to know who this woman could be who dared to look at him in this way, but the quadrille forming at this moment, he was prevented from following her, and when the dance was finished, she had disappeared.

The Marchioness d'Aviella joined Sanchez, and feeling fatigued, begged he would take her to her carriage. He accompanied her to the entrance hall and seated her in her Victoria.

At the instant, as he was turning round to remount the steps leading to the house, another carriage passed, and a glove, held by a small strong hand, slapped him on the face. The marquis gave a cry of rage, and tried to follow the carriage, but it had disappeared. Then Sanchez returned to the steps, picked up the glove and could not repress a slight shiver on recognizing it as one of those worn by the magician. This awkward incident made him feel gloomy the rest of the night. In vain, he questioned several persons about the woman who had insulted him, and only regained a little of his ordinary calm when he rejoined Clotilde.

Eight days afterwards, the church of the *Cite d' Antin* was crowded. The marriage of the marquis with Mademoiselle Schunberg had just been celebrated. As they walked out together they excited general admiration. At the corner of the Rue de Provence, a closed carriage was stationed. One of the windows was lowered at the moment the newly married couple regained their equipage

awaiting them within a few steps distance, and a pale face looked out for a second. It was George de Maurange. With him, were Schiba and the unknown.

"You see, said the latter to George, "I spoke the truth; she is his wife. Now will you join us?"

"From this moment, I am yours, body and soul. What is it you want, madame?"

"I seek for vengeance!" said the unknown.

"And I, fortune!" reflected George.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO TURTLE-DOVES.

Immediately after their marriage the marquis and his wife left for Italy, returning to the villa at Lake Nemi which recalled to both the happiest moments of their existence. We shall not follow them there. They were devoted to each other, and during all the time of their absence, which was prolonged to the month of June, not one cloud darkened the sunlight of their existence. When the moment arrived to return to France, Sanchez disdained the attractions of well known sea-side resorts, and wrote to his mother begging that she would purchase a little chateau for him not too near Paris, where he might pass the summer with his wife. Madame d'Aviella charged her notary to look out for what her son required.

"You have just come at the proper moment, madame," answered the man of business, "for one of my brother lawyers has recently informed me of a charming property for sale."

"Where is it situated?"

"Near Amboise, not far from La Frilière.

"Is it habitable in its present state?"

"Yes, madame; it is ready for immediate occupancy."

"Then, Monsieur Foucault, you must do me a favor."

"What may that be, madame?"

"Start for Ambois this very evening, and if this property seems to answer our views, buy it for me. I give you full power."

"You honor me very highly by this proof of confidence, madame, and I shall try to merit it."

That same evening, Monsieur Foucault left Paris, and the next day reached his friend Dupuy's house. Very soon the latter's gig was harnessed and the two lawyers drove over to the chateau which was for sale. Foucault was enchanted with the property.

"It is a veritable nest," said he to Dupuys; "and exactly suits the two turtle-doves, for whom my client, the marchioness, is buying it."

"A newly married couple?"

"Yes, the marchioness' son, who married Mademoiselle Schunberg, the wealthy banker's daughter."

They soon agreed as to price. Foucault commissioned his son to furnish the house with as much taste as possible, but with no exaggerated luxury, and the same evening, satisfied that Dupuys would fulfill his part of the agreement with taste and tact, he returned to Paris.

Madame d'Aviella was enchanted with the description the lawyer gave of the chateau. She wrote to Sanchez that a country house had been discovered, and that she would be ready to receive him and her daughter-in-law there in about three weeks. Then, accompanied by Gomez, she went herself to Amboise, not wishing to leave to any one else the responsibility of adding the finishing touches to her children's new home. With Dupuy's aid, the marchioness and the steward finished their arrangements in a few days.

A letter from Rome arrived for Madame d'Aviella in Touraine. It was even more explicit than the preceding ones with relation to the great happiness that Sanchez promised himself, when alone with his wife, far from Paris, and safe from unwelcome intruders. This letter gave rise to a fresh scruple and one of extreme delicacy in the marchioness' mind.

Comprehending that however great her son's

affection for her might be, her presence would be an intrusion on the young married couple, she gave up the idea of residing with them, and leaving Gomez at the chateau to await their arrival, returned to Paris, the evening before the day on which Sanchez arrived there with his wife. This return was hailed by all with delight. Isaac awaited his daughter at the hotel d'Aviella. When Clotilde appeared, he held out his arms to her, and the young marchioness threw herself into them and embraced him lovingly.

"My dear child," said the banker in an agitated voice, "you love your old father as much as ever?"

"Oh! father, how can you ask such a thing!" Madame d'Aviella embraced Sanchez affectionately.

"You are very happy then?" she said to him.

"The happiest man on earth, mother; only look at her," he replied, pointing to Clotilde.

In truth, the youthful wife had increased in beauty. Love in touching her with his sword, had given a more decided character to her loveliness, which her absolute happiness also added to. Every feature breathed contentment, and her eyes shone with new brilliancy.

"Remain in Paris! no indeed, Monsieur Schunberg," said Sanchez. "We mean to leave for Amboise to-morrow."

"What! so soon?"

"You must come and see us there, father," said Clotilde affectionately.

"Selfish child!" replied Schunberg looking at her affectionately. Then turning to the marchioness he added—"We may as well resign ourselves, madame."

"But Madame d'Aviella is going to accompany us to Touraine," said Clotilde.

"No, my child," said the marchioness.

"And why not, may I ask?" interrupted Sanchez.

"I shall join you there later."

The marquis made a movement of regret, but did not insist. The prospect of renewing at Amboise his tete-a-tete existence with his wife, caused him a secret joy which overcame any regrets he naturally felt at this second separation from his mother.

Madame Firmin left with them, after having passed the greater part of the day at Neuilly.

The unknown and Schiba, having been informed of the spy's arrival, as well as Clotilde's and the marquis', were waiting impatiently for her. She arrived at the villa in the afternoon, and was immediately ushered into their presence.

"I am quite satisfied with what you have done,

said the unknown to her, "here is your recompense."

Saying these words, she held out to Madame Firmin a small, but well filled pocket-book. The spy would have attempted some delicate protestation, but Schiba did not give her time.

"Take it," said he, "and tell us, step by step, how everything happened."

The recital did not take much time. The life of the marquis and marchioness had been one of unbroken happiness, and Madame Firmin, however great be her desire to enlarge on this theme, soon exhausted it.

"And now, will they remain in Paris?" demanded the unknown.

"No, the Marchioness d'Aviella, his mother, has bought a small chateau in the neighborhood of Amboise. The steward, Monsieur Gomez, is there now, and we are to leave, Monsieur Sanchez, Mademoiselle Clotilde and I, this evening."

"That is well, do not neglect to write us from there, as you did from Rome."

"I promise you I will, madame."

"Mistress," said Schiba, when they were once more alone, "we will act soon."

Some hours later, Schunberg and the Marchion-

ess d'Aviella found themselves alone at the Orleans railway station, where they had accompanied Sanchez and Clotilde.

"We are without children now, marchioness," said Isaac to Madame d'Aviella.

"Yes, but they are so happy, they will owe us life-long gratitude for only remembering their common joy, even to the detriment of our own personal gratification."

"For the last twenty years, I have lived for Clotilde alone, marchioness."

"You are not the one to be most pitied, Monsieur Schunberg; you have your business to distract your thoughts; but as for me, what have I to make me forget? Yet, I do not complain."

During this time, Sanchez and Clotilde in a reserved carriage of the train, revelled in numerous projects, and made a thousand plans for their future life in the home which as yet, was unknown to them. Having full confidence in the exquisite taste of his mother, Sanchez had promised all sorts of marvels in advance.

Another less agreeable tete-a-tete, contrasting strongly with that of Clotilde and her husband, was taking place in the carriage next to theirs. Madame Firmin and Magnet, Clotilde's favorite,

were at war. The intelligent little animal, who was separated from his mistress much against his will, had never entertained any very strong feeling of friendship for the governess. Madame Firmin had a horror of all dogs. In spite of his pretty, coaxing ways, Magnet had never found grace in her eyes.

Magnet was traveling by rail for the first time; before long he began to tremble with terror at the noise of the train, and in spite of his antipathy to Madame Firmin, the little thing took refuge, with lowered ears, under her dress. He entered this retreat so quietly that the governess did not perceive it for some time, but suddenly awakening from a reverie in which she had been calculating once more what her espionage would secure for her in the future, she made a quick movement, touching Magnet with her foot, who, in sudden alarm, fled to the other side of the carriage, barking with all his might.

"Will you be quiet, you hateful little beast!" cried Madame Firmin accompanying this command with a blow of her parasol vigorously applied on the little creature's spine. His howls redoubled; then a wild struggle ensued. Madame Firmin, fearing that Clotilde, in spite of the noise of the

locomotive, might hear her little pet complain, tried to catch him; but Magnet leaped from seat to seat, then on to the ground only to spring up again on the cushions, escaping her only to bark again with renewed fury.

This extraordinary scuffle in such a confined space lasted several minutes, at the end of which time, Madame Firmin, breathless, her forehead bathed in perspiration, dropped helpless and exhausted on one of the seats. Magnet then took refuge in the darkest corner he could find, keeping a watchful eye on the governess, until their arrival at Tours.

When Clotilde took him on her knees in the carriage, Magnet had not yet regained his serenity and in spite of the engaging smiles directed at him by Madame Firmin, who occupied the fourth place in the carriage, apostrophising him as, "my pet," he darted looks of vindictive eloquence at her.

They arrived.

Gomez, hat in hand, waited respectfully at the gate of the chateau. During the drive Monsieur Dupuys had called Clotilde's attention to the beauties of the neighborhood they were going to live in. The little chateau realized their most extraordinary hopes. Madame Firmin alone seemed

discontented. She had, in vain, tried to discover her room. One alone, besides those set apart for the use of the marquis and marchioness, was to be seen, and Gomez had already installed himself there.

"What are you looking for, Madame Firmin?"

"My room, Madame la Marquise."

"Naturally," said Clotilde, "poor Madame Firmin! where can her room be?"

"Above the coach-house at the far end of the garden, madame," replied Gomez, in a tone which admitted of no other observation from the companion, "and if Madame la Marquise and madame," added he, addressing himself to the spy, "will do me the honor of following, I will show it to them."

"Let us go with Gomez," said Sanchez.

They descended the steps of the front entrance and walked towards the out houses situated behind some thick clumps of trees which completely hid them from view. The building before which the party arrived, was composed of a ground floor containing the coach-house and stalls, where twelve horses and five or six carriages could be easily accommodated. A steep staircase at the left side of the building led to the first landing, where half a dozen rooms opened out of a wide passage which

ran the whole length of the building. Those immediately above the coach-house had been set aside for Madame Firmin's use.

"This is charming," said Clotilde. "What do you think of it, Madame Firmin?"

"Charming indeed, madame, I shall be quite comfortable here; only I shall be rather lonely."

"You need not be anxious on that point madame," interrupted the steward. "Manoel, who will be here in a few days with the horses, will occupy the two rooms next this, above the stalls. Now, if monsieur and madame will come down again, Monsieur Dupuys and I will show them the yard and kennels."

"Hunter! You think of everything," said Sanchez smiling. "Come, let us go."

They descended, and going round the building, came to a spacious yard, with a hen coop and pond intended for duck.

A small low building was situated at the far end of the yard. These were the kennels, where Gomez promised himself the pleasure of housing the hounds worthy of his sporting tastes. As they passed by the door, it was suddenly burst open and an enormous bull-dog rushed at Madame Firmin with a fearful yell.

"Ah! my God!" she cried rushing off in terror.

But Gomez's voice immediately calmed the excited animal.

"Down, Demonio, down," he cried in a voice of authority. "Don't be afraid, Madame la Marquise," he added, "Demonio, in spite of his aggressive looks is a faithful dog, and gentle as a lamb; he has never bitten any one."

As a proof of these reassuring words, the bulldog, who seemed to understand them, allowed himself to be caressed, and on a sign from his master, licked Clotilde's hand. Magnet, whom she carried in her arms, did not display any jealousy; he welcomed Demonio like a comrade, as if to thank him for avenging the blows the governess had inflicted on him at different times.

The visit to the chateau lasted some time yet, to the great satisfaction of the new owners, from whom Monsieur Dupuys, as he went homewards, carried most grateful thanks.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A REPRESENTATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR.

Several months passed rapidly, for the Marquis and Marchioness d'Aviella. Keeping strictly to the programme they had mapped out for themselves, they avoided becoming intimate with any of the country families, and enjoyed with unalloyed delight their stay in this charming retreat. Each day seemed to add to their mutual love, and the hours glided along rapidly. They were oblivious of Paris and the entire world, living only for each other. Sanchez allowed himself to be gently lulled into a calm dream of happiness which effaced even the remembrance of the mysterious insult offered to him on the evening of the masked ball. Gomez busied himself between the garden, the kennels, and his never failing pipe. The greatest pleasure he experienced was wandering about the country with his faithful Demonio. Manoel devoted himself to the care of the six horses which had been brought from Paris. Madame Firmin, carrying

on her infamous role of spy with a truly angelic placidity, kept up a regular correspondence with the pseudo Englishman.

Just about this time, after the receipt of a letter from the companion stating that the love of the marquis for his beautiful wife had apparently reached its height, Sir William requested her not to write any more for the present, adding that she would hear from him very soon. This rather disappointed the companion, as she dreaded the effect this order might have on her future prospects; but she was reassured on again reading the letter, and consecrated the spare time she was in the habit of devoting to her secret correspondence, to assisting the gardener in taking care of the little greenhouse belonging to the chateau. This was an object of particular solicitude to Sanchez. Everything seemed to promise a prolongation of happiness and calm for the inhabitants of the little chateau, when an incident, trifling in appearance, was the precursor of the awful tragedy unfolded in this history.

One morning the marquis received a visit from the Count de Pardieux, the proprietor of a country seat two leagues from Vauvroy. In addition to being president of the tribunal of Tours, the count

had an immense fortune which enhanced the importance of his position.

Monsieur de Pardieux was a man of about fifty-five years of age, tall, thin, and very distinguished looking. After saluting d'Aviella, and without giving him time to demand the object of his visit, he said to him:

"Pardon me, Monsieur le Marquis, for forcing myself into your house without having first had the honor of acquainting you with the object of my visit."

"I shall be delighted to hear to what I owe the pleasure of your visit."

"The poor people of Vouvroy are in great trouble just now, and my wife has conceived the idea of coming to their aid by giving, in our park, a dramatic representation to which we are now begging all the surrounding aristocracy to lend their support."

"It is a most excellent idea, indeed, monsieur, and I am sure I can congratulate Madame de Pardieux in advance on the success of her idea."

"Then, Monsieur le Marquis, may we hope that you and Madame d'Aviella will honor us by being among the spectators. The tickets are five louis; it is, of course, a great deal to pay for the doubtful

pleasure of seeing amateurs act, but it is for the poor."

"The idea is a most laudable one, Monsieur le Comte, please put down the Marchioness d'Aviella for ten tickets, but I beg you will excuse us from being present at the fete. The marchioness and I never visit anywhere."

"Permit me to hope, Monsieur le Marquis, that you and Madame d'Aviella will make an exception in our favor."

The following afternoon a victoria drove up to the door of the chateau, and an elegantly dressed young woman descended. A moment later, the servant announced the Countess de Pardieux. Aware of what had passed the previous day between her husband and the count, the marchioness guessed the reason of this charitable countess' visit, and mentally resolved to resist as steadfastly as Sanchez had done; but the strongest resolutions often yield to the instantaneous sympathy with which certain persons inspire us, and everything happened in opposition to Madame d'Aviella's desires.

"I have called with your tickets, madame," said the countess taking out a little pocket-book, "and if I have lost no time in doing so, it is because I have made up my mind to overcome the resolution

Monsieur d'Aviella expressed to my husband yesterday."

Clotilde tried to raise a few objections, but Madame de Pardieux did not allow her to continue.

She was a very fascinating woman of about thirty years of age, but only fifteen in gayety of heart. Her amiable features, prepossessed one in her favor at once. She expressed herself in a soft, caressing voice calculated to conquer and captivate.

"I am determined that you shall come," she said, addressing Clotilde with a bewitching smile, "for I am to take part in the play myself, and if you do not come, I shall imagine that it is because you are afraid I will act too badly."

This phrase demanded a compliment; Clotilde replied:

"I see, Madame la Comtesse, that I ought to yield, did I not know that the words you have just uttered were the confession of exaggerated modesty."

"You insist upon refusing then?"

"I beg you will excuse us upon this occasion."

"No, no, Madame la Marquise; and since I cannot accept mercy from you, pray ask Monsieur d'Aviella to come here, we will see whether he will also resist me, since it is to be war between us, I

warn you that I shall flirt desperately with the marquis."

And as if in support of this threat, pronounced in the gayest possible tone, Madame de Pardieux rearranged her bonnet before the mirror.

"I tremble already, Madame la Comtesse," said the marchioness smiling; "no, I do not wish for war, and the proof is, that I will call my husband, in order to see if I can coax him to grant your request."

"Ah! that is very delightful of you."

As she spoke, the marchioness rang the bell.

Madame Firmin entered.

"Please ask Monsieur d'Aviella to come here for a moment," said Clotilde to her.

When the companion had withdrawn to execute this order, the countess continued:

"Thank you, once more, Madame la Marquis; you have given me a great pleasure, for to confess the truth, I had a bet on this. Ah! now your curiosity is awakened; I will explain. My carriage has sometimes crossed yours, on the Amboise road."

"Very likely, in fact, I have a vague recollection of it."

"You could not have remarked it; another person who always accompanied you captivated your

entire attention. Don't blush at your happiness! To love her husband, is the ideal ambition of a good woman. Then, I was not the only one who noticed your devotion to each other. Those who sent you invitations in vain, have tried to discover the reason of your persistent refusals; and they have found it in your affection. Do you know what they have named you? The wolves! Indignant at these criticisms, I determined to put an end to them, by betting with Madame de Chambrulé that I would overcome your determination to live so isolated. My dramatic representation was a superb occasion. You surely cannot refuse me!"

"I shall certainly be present, Madame la Comtesse, if only for the gratification of applauding you."

"You are as good as you are beautiful, dear madame, and that is saying a great deal, believe me."

Sanchez entered, and Clotilde explained to him what had passed, and told him what she had promised.

"I hope I am not going to meet with any opposition from you, Monsieur le Marquis," said the countess, when Clotilde had ceased speaking, "and that you will ratify what Madame la Marquise has been good enough to promise."

"The countess having given her promise, I am happy to add mine to it."

The countess thanked them both, and drove home, delighted with her success. Sanchez and Clotilde watched the carriage as it disappeared down the slope of the avenue.

"Thanks," said the young wife throwing her arms round his neck, "you were very good to consent so readily."

"And will you be glad to go to this fete?"

"Since you are to accompany me, yes, most certainly."

"Then it will give me pleasure too."

In spite of this confession, a secret presentiment interfered with the marquis' anticipations of pleasure.

"This is an end to our repose," he reflected. "We were so happy all alone!"

Nothing happened, however, to justify his gloomy forebodings. The representation proved most successful; Madame de Pardieux obtained a veritable triumph as an actress, which was only equalled by Clotilde's beauty.

The young marchioness won the admiration of all, and a suppressed murmur of admiration passed through the audience, as she took her seat in all the glory of her fresh young beauty. This verita-

ble triumph delighted Sanchez. Far from awakening any feeling of jealousy in his heart, this passion which drove him mad, the supremacy which Clotilde attained over all the other guests, doubled his happiness in possessing her, by making him realize her full value.

He acknowledged that he was undoubtedly the happiest man on earth, and thanked God who had allowed him this full measure of bliss. He mentally resolved that he would no longer repel the advances of his neighbor, and Clotilde, who had enjoyed herself immensely, applauded this determination.

The Marquis and Marchioness d'Aviella left the count's country seat at rather a late hour, and during the drive home mutually confessed to each other how thoroughly they had enjoyed the entertainment. At the moment when their chateau was being lighted up in preparation for their return, three post-chaises, each drawn by four grey horses, passed them on the high road at the foot of the hill. A hand coming out of one of the carriage windows pointed out the marquis' chateau, and Schiba, under the disguise of Sir William Perkins, said to the unknown and George de Maurange, who were seated together opposite to him:

"There is the abode of the accursed one!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE THIRD ACCOMPLICE.

When the marquis and his young wife left Paris for Touraine, Schiba and the unknown, as well as de Maurange, entered into a new compact. A complete calm had succeeded to the excitement of their lives; but before describing this period of waiting, it is indispensable we should return to the events which had led George determining to become the accomplice of the old Indian and his companion.

My readers have not forgotten the terrible scene in consequence of which the Marquis d'Aviella's late adversary would have indubitably succumbed, if one of the unknown's slaves had not undertaken, for a thousand rupees, to suck the wound. After this tragic incident, George had fallen into a state of torpor which lasted several days, and which the old khansaman, for the sufferer's sake, prolonged on several occasions. He came out of this as one does from a dream, painful at the commencement,

but of which the joyous ending obliterates the horror of the first moments.

As soon as he was able to walk a few steps in the garden, supported either by Schiba or the unknown, his one thought was how he could sufficiently thank them for their constant, watchful nursing and care. Yet, gradually, his memory returned and he began a discussion on serious matters by declaring to the unknown that he must leave Neuilly that very day, in order to dispute Clotilde's hand with the marquis.

"You are, of course, free to do as you choose, Monsieur de Maurange," she said; "I have no wish to detain you."

"Thank you, madame; I will leave your house this evening, but will never forget that I owe my life to you."

"I am not the one you must thank," replied the unknown, "it is he."

She pointed to Schiba, who entered at that moment.

"He!" repeated George, "ah! yes, I remember now. It seems to me I have had glimpses of him many times bending over my bedside, administering some cooling draught. You are a doctor then, Schiba?"

"Yes, Sahib," replied the old man; "I cure the hearts as well as the bodies of those who suffer."

The serious manner in which these words were pronounced impressed George.

"Hearts also?" he said.

"Yes," continued the old Indian, "hearts also, and to attain that end, I employ means analogous to those which serve me for their perishable covering. I can sound them and discover the cause of their sufferings. Here we have three invalids; myself, for I am wounded here," (and he pointed to his heart) "for more than forty years. My mistress has borne for several years, a dark, crushing grief, but the same blow will save us both. Your moral ailment is less terrible than ours, but it is not the less painful on that account. You think of leaving us, may I ask what are your future plans?"

"I shall try to regain the ground my long illness has probably made me lose in the one enterprise which concerns my happiness and in which I mean to succeed."

"Too late! I know to what you are alluding."

George looked reproachfully at the unknown.

"I have no secrets from Schiba," she said, "for I know he is silent as the grave."

"Yes, too late," repeated the old Indian. "Since you were carried here wounded, in a dying state, Monsieur le Marquis has gained ground; his love is returned, he is accepted by Monsieur Schunberg, and before a month is over, will be his son-in-law."

On hearing this news, which Madame Firmin had just sent from Rome, de Maurange fell back in an armchair, overcome with emotion. The unknown and Schiba waited in silence for some moments, out of respect for their guest's feelings.

George's face expressed more discouragement than grief. An expressive smile from Schiba called his mistress' attention to it.

"Let us throw aside our masks," he said, "our cause is a common one, and we cannot ensure success unless we deal quite frankly with each other. Listen to me, then, Monsieur de Maurange, and let there be no false delicacy. If Mademoiselle Schunberg marries the marquis, you will be left with only the hundred thousand francs you received as the price of your wound. Don't try to defend yourself. I began by saying: Let us throw aside our masks; let yours drop and ours will quickly follow. You regret Mademoiselle Schunberg's fortune, which is very natural, for there are few

such fortunes as hers. The man who has carried away this prize, is our common enemy, the Marquis d'Aviella. Well! do you wish to be revenged on him?"

"Take revenge on the marquis?"

"On your successful rival, on the man who nearly killed you, and has ruined your prospects," interrupted the unknown.

"Yes, I wish it; but how, since you prevented me killing him?"

"Ah! that was our affair," said Schiba, and such a glare of hatred blazed in his eyes, that a look of hesitation passed over George's features.

"He has robbed you of the one whom you looked upon as your betrothed only a few months ago, he has cruelly wounded you and ruined your future. Why do you hesitate? Accept my offer; join your cause to ours, swear to second us in all our efforts against him, even to the peril of your own life, and before another year takes flight, you will be a millionaire."

"Swear," said the unknown in her turn, "and Schiba has just declared, before another year has passed, I will make you as wealthy as if you had been victorious over your enemy."

George looked as he felt, incredulous.

"You doubt it?—Schiba, hand me my casket, so that I may prove we are not making empty promises."

The khansaman pressed a button hidden in the wall of the little boudoir and disclosed a secret cupboard from which the old Indian took an ebony casket bound with steel clasps and further secured by a microscopical lock. The unknown drew from a little sachet she wore concealed in her corsage a gold key of exquisite workmanship and unlocking the casket placed it open before the young man, saying:

"There is enough to make the fortune of a king, Monsieur de Maurange."

George was dazzled. The casket was filled with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, opals, and pearls of enormous size, of remarkable purity and inestimable value.

"There is enough to pay you ten times the amount I offer."

"You are right," said de Maurange in an agitated voice.

And keeping his eyes fastened on the tempting casket he added:

"And supposing I accept, what sum will you give me?"

"Three million; will that satisfy you?"

"Three millions?—Yes, yes—And when shall I get them?"

"The day on which the Marquis d'Aviella dies," said Schiba.

"A second duel?" demanded George.

"No," said the unknown.

"A murder then?" exclaimed de Maurange, "you want me to murder him?"

"That would be worse than a crime, it would be a blunder," replied the unknown. "No, Monsieur de Maurange, we do not wish that; you have neither duel nor quarrel with Monsieur d'Aviella; his blood will not be shed either by you or us; but he must die, a terrible, frightful death; and by the soul of him whose loss I mourn, I swear to you he dies doubly guilty."

"By the souls of Boxio and Nahoua, he will die!" repeated Schiba.

George listened to his two companions with a feeling almost approaching to terror, and comprehending only that nothing would induce them to renounce their project. The unknown had become animated while she spoke, and the fire of a terrible and implacable hatred blazed in her eyes. Schiba, on the contrary, remained calm and

solemn, offering a marked contrast to his mistress, yet not the less expressive of an immovable resolution.

The offer of the three millions tempted de Maurange to the last degree; feeling that he might never again have an opportunity of penetrating the mystery surrounding his two companions, he suddenly said:

"Give me an account of your lives, and I will join you."

"That we will never do," said Schiba.

"But you know mine," said de Maurange, unable to give any better reason for justifying the intense curiosity he longed to satisfy.

"We had to know it; but what does our past matter to you."

"I suppose you are right," said de Maurange, after a moment's reflection.

"You accept them? Well! you must swear!"

"One thing more: What proof have I that the marquis is going to marry Mademoiselle Schunberg?"

"Here it is," said Schiba, giving him Madame Firmin's letter.

"That seems enough," said George after reading it. "Well! I swear I will second you in everything if the marriage is accomplished."

"And I, on my part, swear to give you what I have promised as soon as our desire is accomplished," said the unknown.

From the moment this agreement was entered into, of which de Maurange did not yet comprehend all the importance, he conscientiously obeyed all the wishes of the unknown and Schiba. So far, they were very simple. The day of the Marquis d'Aviella's marriage to Clotilde, they all went in a carriage, as we know, to see the newly married couple leave the church. This was the only time de Maurange left the villa where the unknown had given it to be understood he must never leave, so as to avoid attracting attention. Things were going on in this way, when Madame Firmin's last letter from Touraine informed Schiba that Sanchez's happiness was beyond limit and that he idolized Clotilde.

"The moment has arrived to strike, mistress," said Schiba to the unknown, "I shall leave this evening."

That evening, Sir William Perkins left Paris.

When George asked the unknown for what purpose he was taking this journey:

"We shall rejoin him very soon," was her only answer.

Shortly after Schiba's departure, the unknown announced to de Maurange that they would leave for Amboise the following morning. Three post-chaises conveyed George, the unknown, and the *bahis*. Sir William awaited them at Amboise; when they arrived there, he took his seat in the carriage with the young woman and de Maurange; the first words he said were:

"Everything is ready, mistress, and I have news."

After having passed the little chateau where Sanchez and Clotilde lived, and which he pointed out to his companions, Schiba ordered the coachman to drive by another road which led them beyond la Frillière. After driving in this direction for about a quarter of an hour, the carriage stopped before a lonely house, in which not a single light could be discerned. Schiba opened the door, and requested George to enter, the unknown and her suite following. What most struck de Maurange when he penetrated into this melancholy looking abode were the precautions taken to double all the shutters in such a way that no light could be seen from without. There was nothing extraordinary about this spacious habitation, which was situated in the middle of a large garden surrounded on all sides by a high wall.

When the attendants retired, with the exception of two who remained to serve the repast, the three accomplices sat down at the table.

"And now, Schiba, tell us all you know," said the unknown.

The khansaman began in these terms:

"No one can suspect our presence in this place. The lawyer at Amboise, from whom I bought this property looks on me as a misanthropic Englishman who prefers a solitary life. Madame Firmin will report to us every day. I saw her to-day, during the absence of the marquis and his wife. Heaven is on our side, mistress, for yielding to the pressing invitation of one of their neighbors the marquis and his wife went to an entertainment to-day. This has altogether modified my plan."

"Ah! what are you going to do?"

"You shall hear, mistress. You are quite determined to second us, Monsieur de Maurange?"

"You have my word. More than ever I am on your side."

"Then, do you know the Count de Pardieux, president of the tribunal at Tours?"

"He is my cousin."

"Brahma is helping us," said the old man.

"To-morrow you must pay him a visit, so as to renew your acquaintance."

"And then?"

"I will tell you later."

There was no more said that evening; but when George had retired to his room:

"Mistress! Mistress!" cried the old Indian, "let us thank Brahma; very soon we shall attain our end."

CHAPTER XX.

THE ANONYMOUS LETTERS.

Intimate relations were soon established between the Count and Countess de Pardieux and the Marquis and Marchioness d'Aviella. The distance separating the two chateaus rendered the acquaintance still more agreeable, by keeping it within proper bounds. Nevertheless, the president and his wife passed several days at the little chateau, and Sanchez and Clotilde were frequent guests of the count and countess. Each time that Clotilde saw Madame de Pardieux, she felt herself more attracted towards her, and the mutual sympathy they experienced increased. On his side, the marquis found in the serious, though very amiable-minded president, a communion of ideas which made his society most acceptable.

A *bal champetre* was organized by the countess, and Sanchez and Clotilde were among the first invited. This time they accepted readily. A tent was erected on the lawn which lay on one side of

the Pardieux chateau. Planks were laid on the grass to accommodate the dancers, and when the orchestra played the opening chords, more than a hundred guests had taken their places under this artistic shelter. Sanchez and Clotilde were among the first arrivals. Suddenly, when all the dancers were arranging themselves for a waltz, the marchioness saw her husband's eyes turn persistently towards the Countess de Pardieux, who was talking to a young man. Clotilde recognized George de Maurange. His duel with Sanchez having remained a secret, his appearance awoke only a very moderate degree of surprise in the young wife's mind. But d'Aviella could not repress a gesture of anger, which was not noticed by anyone, except, perhaps, George, who while conversing with his hostess, watched each movement of his old rival. When the countess left him to join the dancers, de Maurange went up to the marquis, and bowing to him with a courteous smile.

"Have you done as I have, Monsieur le Marquis?" he asked him.

"I do not understand you, monsieur," replied Sanchez in a frigid tone.

"Have you forgotten the past? For my part, I confess that I do not retain any remembrance of it

and that in pardoning all your success, I come to you without hate or anger. We cannot be friends, I acknowledge, but we can, I think, meet each other on neutral ground, as we do now, without any fear of reviving our past quarrel. Do you agree with me?"

The perfect courtesy with which this was said, left Sanchez no escape.

"Let it be between us as you desire, monsieur. I, for my part, have nothing to forgive," he said moving away.

In spite of this answer, George's presence caused serious annoyance to the marquis; yet his old rival's conduct displayed such thoughtful tact, that in the end Sanchez's uneasiness completely vanished. George de Maurange, in the most natural manner, avoided being one instant alone with Clotilde. Nevertheless, the marquis' return drive was not as gay as usual, and for the first time a feeling of constraint reigned between husband and wife.

Not for the world would Sanchez have spoken to Clotilde of George, and on her side, neither could she confide to him the reflections which the presence of her old admirer gave rise to in her mind. From that day, the fetes followed each other in

quick succession at the Count de Pardieux's chateau. Summer was drawing to a close and the countess, wishing to profit by the last fine days of the season, gave her friends little time for repose. George was indispensable at the chateau. No one equalled him in the art of varying the entertainments and organizing them in a proper manner.

This round of pleasures was the means of bringing him into constant intercourse with Sanchez and Clotilde, and the marquis, strong in his love and the esteem in which he held his wife, no longer took umbrage at his presence.

The worldliness which George professed in several conversations in which Sanchez took part, impressed him with the belief that what had charmed George in Clotilde was her large fortune, and that having lost all hope on this point, he had ended by placing her among the ranks of those women to whom a man may be perfectly courteous, but also completely indifferent. The marquis and marchioness were in this way gradually led, to renew their past relations with George. Clotilde, who more than Sanchez, was able to appreciate de Maurange's well bred reserve, allowed herself to be deceived, and treated him as she did others whom she met at the house of the Countess de Pardieux.

By acting in this way, de Maurange, as the readers will doubtless have guessed, only followed the instructions given him by Schiba and the unknown. Without being fully aware of their plan, he knew that he was acting in an inimical manner towards Sanchez, and the sight of Clotilde, so beautiful and contented in her husband's love, without awakening the burning fever he had been a prey to during a few hours in the villa at Neuilly at the time his mysterious hostess had burned the anonymous letter he had confided to Chamblay for Madame Firmin, made him even more conscientious in the execution of the orders he had sworn to obey.

Invitations were issued for a farewell fete to be given by the Contess de Pardieux. A concert, followed by a ball, was to close in a becoming manner, the brilliant reunions, which had made her chateau so deservedly popular. Autumn had set in, and the cold winds made families think of returning to the warmth and comfort of their houses in town. Several had deferred their return to Tours, Amboise and Paris, in order to assist at this last ball at the chateau de Pardieux. Sanchez and Clotilde were not of this number. Rather tired of the fetes they had been taking part in lately,

they had decided to pass the winter in Touraine, and the marquis had written to his mother to make such arrangements as would enable her to visit them there. A gray September sky gave to the country those somber tints calculated to impress certain sensitive natures disagreeably.

Sanchez was peculiarly sensitive to atmospheric influence. The hot blood that flowed in his veins loved light and sunshine; so he was not in a propitious mood for taking a share in the gay doings. Nevertheless, having promised Clotilde to conduct her to this last entertainment, he never dreamed of breaking his engagement.

On his side, Gomez, almost as much under the influence of the weather as his master, was in the worst of tempers, which was not improved by the state in which he found his faithful companion Demonio. For two days past, he had remained in his kennel, indifferent to the voice of his master, whom he was, as a rule, so prompt to obey. He lay for hours with his head resting on his fore paws. Sometimes, as if attacked by a sudden feeling of restlessness, he would vainly seek for a position which admitted of repose. His look naturally gentle and intelligent, was wandering and anxious. He refused all nourishment and at times, suddenly

rushed out the full length of his chain, his mouth open, as if charging an imaginary enemy. His evident suffering affected Gomez painfully. The marquis noticed the melancholy appearance of his steward and asked the cause.

"Demonio is very ill, Monsieur le Marquis."

"What is the matter with him?"

"I do not know. If he does not get better, I must send for a veterinary surgeon."

"You ought to do so now. Let us go and see Demonio."

When they arrived in the yard where the bulldog lay, he was crouching far back in his kennel.

"Demonio! Demonio! here!" said Gomez going up to him.

On hearing his master's voice, the dull dog raised his head, and then allowed it to drop again on his chest.

"You see, Monsieur le Marquis, he hardly hears me, and here is his food lying untouched since yesterday. Some vile creature must have poisoned him."

"You are alarming yourself unnecessarily, Gomez. The dog looks ill; but I do not think the case so serious as you imagine; nevertheless, you ought not to neglect consulting a veterinary surgeon without delay."

"I will go to Amboise for one this moment."

They returned to the cheateau and entered it, without remarking that Manoel came out, and after having slipped behind a thicket, made his way to the stables as if he wished to avoid being seen. Gomez mounted to his garret. The marquis re-entered his room to read and smoke. Clotilde was in the salon, and the sound of the piano which she was playing could be plainly heard by her husband in his little sanctum. Sanchez took up the book he had been reading the evening before. A folded paper fell out. The marquis picked it up, opened it, and read the following words, in a writing altogether unfamiliar to him:

"Treacherous as the waves are the daughters of Eve! Eyes of the purest azure sometimes hide a vile heart. It is more difficult to guess a woman's thoughts than to know what God thinks. She who deceives you, blinds you with her caresses. Watch George, it is he you must distrust.

A FRIEND."

This anonymous denunciation brought a crowd of thoughts to the marquis' mind. He did not attach any great importance to it at first, but he reread it twenty times.

"This note was a cowardly calumny," he said to

himself. "Clotilde is an angel; to suspect her is an infamy! She loves me, and has never loved another."

But in spite of this reasoning, he felt the doubt grow in his heart, a terrible, frightful doubt, which seemed to pierce him like a poignard. He began to pace the room in a state of agitation, pondering on what he ought to do. The idea of going to Clotilde and loyally showing her the note, at first occurred to him, but he did not feel sufficiently master of himself, if his young wife did not accept his enquiry as he would wish. Crushing the missive angrily between his fingers, he unfolded and re-read it, unable to keep his eyes from the fatal warning, until at last, he threw it in the fire, but even while it was burning, he devoured each phrase as it disappeared in the flames. This salutary *auto da fe* helped him to regain his composure. He made a violent effort to banish his melancholy forebodings, trying to allow himself to be soothed by listening to his wife's music.

At last he got up and went down to join her.

"May I listen a little nearer?" he said to her.

"You were listening to me then?"

"Yes, for an hour past. Continue, I beg of you."

The marchioness did as he requested. Sanchez

leaned with his elbows on the piano and looked at her very earnestly. Clotilde smiled up at him as she played, and that smile banished from his mind all that remained of the fatal impression caused by the anonymous letter.

The day passed in making preparations for the evening. Clotilde had arranged a charming toilette.

"Your taste is simply perfect," said Sanchez to her. "You are going to be too beautiful, my Clotilde!"

"Never enough, dear, since you are the one I adorn myself for."

"Who gave you the idea of this very original toilette?"

"Oh! I saw something like it worn by Madame de Chambruelé's god-daughter, the Baroness de Mauroy. Do you know her?"

"Scarcely."

"She danced the cotillon with Monsieur de Maurange."

This name revived all Sanchez's anguish.

His face darkened.

"There is something the matter with you, Sanchez?" said Clotilde.

"No, there is nothing," he replied; leaving the room.

When they were seated in the carriage which was to convey them to the count's chateau, the marquis, not knowing what line of conduct he ought to adopt, finally made up his mind to watch George and Clotilde very closely during the ball. Never had de Maurange been in better spirits than on this evening. This gayety irritated Sanchez.

Never had George found so many different occasions to approach the countess and speak to her. The young wife laughed at his sallies, never noticing the dark looks her husband directed at her. It required great strength of will on the marquis' part to restrain himself. One incident put the finishing touch to his fury. While the orchestra were playing the concluding chords of a waltz, separated from his wife by a crowd of dancers, he saw her take a few turns in the dance with George, and it seemed to him that the latter whispered something in Clotilde's ear while they danced. At the sight of this, the blood rushed to his heart and he was on the point of springing forward to drag his wife from her partner's arms, when the music ceased.

A scene of violence would undoubtedly have taken place during their return to La Frillière, if the marquis had been left alone with Clotilde during

the drive; but the springs of a neighbor's carriage had got broken and the gentleman having accepted a seat in theirs, a favor d'Aviella dared not refuse, he, under the plea of extreme fatigue, left Clotilde to do the honors during the drive home. On arriving near the chateau, at the moment that the carriage entered the winding avenue leading up to the gate, the three travelers heard in the distance a prolonged howl of distress, which impressed them uncomfortably.

"Do you hear that, Sanchez?"

The marquis did not reply.

"Some wandering dog," suggested the baron.

"There is something sinister in the sound of his voice," remarked Clotilde.

"The silence of the night makes it sound more weird."

On arriving at the entrance, the carriage, after having stopped to allow Sanchez and Clotilde to descend, returned down the avenue. Madame Firmin was waiting to attend on the marchioness. The marquis left his wife and went to his own room, where he dropped into an armchair, a prey to the most violent agitation. The manner in which he had left her, struck Clotilde, who dismissed her companion as soon as she had regained her apart-

ment. Her own preoccupation prevented her from remarking the ill concealed agitation of Madame Firmin, who gladly availed herself of the permission to retire. Clotilde entered her oratory, situated at the side of her bedroom. Magnet, who dozed lazily on a velvet cushion, awoke, and came gently towards her, wagging his silky fringed tail; but the marchioness accorded him but a cold welcome, and the spoilt pet, very much surprised, returned to his cushion.

Clotilde knelt down and prayed God to remove the dark shadow on her husband's mind. After having offered up a long and sincere prayer, she returned to her room and looked despairingly at the mantel shelf, never expecting to find the bouquet Sanchez was in the habit of placing daily there, but the bouquet was there, and the young marchioness trembled with joy on beholding it.

"Oh! I am foolish," she inwardly reflected; "it is only a passing cloud." And seizing the bouquet, she showered kisses on it. But scarcely had her lips touched the flowers, when a sensation of drowsiness overcame her, she tried to struggle against the feeling, but her eyelids gradually drooped over her beautiful, tearful eyes. In vain he endeavored to reach the bell communicating

with Sanchez's room, before she was able to seize the cord, she sank gently on the ground, her head reposing on the divan.

As she lay thus, in her ball dress, her lovely arms and neck exposed to view, and the smile with which she had welcomed the sight of the fatal bouquet still lingering on her lips, she was divinely beautiful. When the regularity of her breathing proved that she was sound asleep, a curtain was raised, and Schiba cautiously advanced, and watched her for some time in silence. The cold, steadfast look of the old Indian was terrible. A pale smile crossed his lips as bending over the young wife, he held a small flask to her nostrils, which, as she inhaled seemed to make her sink into a deeper slumber; then, opening the window, he gave a scarcely perceptible whistle.

A moment later, four *bahis* crawled in through the window by means of a ladder placed against the wall of the chateau. Without uttering a word, Schiba directed their attention to the sleeping marchioness. Then one of the *bahis* unfolded a hammock, and aided by his companions, placed Clotilde in it. Then having fastened a stout rope to each of the rings of the hammock, they launched it into space and gently lowered it into the hands

of four other attendants. That done, those who remained in the chateau with Schiba, descended the ladder, and all the party hastened to the little door opening on the Vauvroy road.

There a carriage was waiting. They placed Clotilde in it, and Schiba, giving, this time, a very shrill whistle, waited with the *bahis*. The instant this whistle sounded, one of the sides of a window caressly closed in Sanchez's room, was pushed open, and a note, folded round a little pebble, was thrown at the marquis' feet. He rushed to the window, but the night was dark, and he could only hear the sound of fast retreating footsteps. He turned, picked up the note and opened it. Traced by the same hand as the one he had received in the morning, he saw the following words:

"She is deceiving you; at this moment George is with her. If you wish to see them, leave your park by the Vauvroy door, and have confidence in the man you will find there."

The marquis, after having read the letter, with one bound rushed up to Clotilde's room and entering, found it empty; then dismayed, wild with grief and anger, he seized a poignard, left the chateau, and hastened to the spot designated.

A few minutes before, one of the *bahis*, smaller

than any of his companions, had rejoined Schiba and his companions.

"Well?" said the old Indian to him.

"He has the letter. I shall go with her; you must await him here."

The carriage with the unknown, disguised as a *bahis*, and two attendants immediately drove off.

Scarcely had she disappeared, when the marquis, hardly conscious of what he was doing, came up to the khansaman.

CHAPTER XXI.

HYPNOTISM.

In spite of the obscurity of the night, Schiba had not neglected to take every precaution. Neither he nor any of his attendants wore the Indian costume; only the *bahis*, who had entered the carriage with Clotilde and the unknown, wore their national dress. This prudence was not thrown away, for, at the moment that Sanchez arrived, the sky cleared, and the silvery disc of the moon was visible for several moments.

At first, the marquis did not see the old Indian, who stood in the shadow with the disguised *bahis*. He threw a questioning glance around and gave way to a quick movement of anger. Schiba, leaving the group of attendants, came forward into the light and said:

“Marquis Sanchez d’Aviella, I am the one you are looking for.”

At the sound of his voice, the marquis turned round and giving a searching look at the old man,

tried to obtain a more distinct view of his features.

"You need not try to see if you know me. We have never met before," said the khansaman. And to remove any lingering doubt from the marquis' mind on this score, he lifted his broad brimmed hat, which concealed the upper part of his face, and the moon's rays fell on his long, white beard.

"Who are you?" demanded the marquis.

"One who speaks the truth."

"You have lied, and you shall die!" exclaimed Sanchez raising his poignard to strike.

He had scarcely raised the weapon when the *bahis* rushing forward, quickly disarmed him, and holding him firmly in their strong grasp, forced him to stand motionless. There had hardly been any struggle. The unexpectedness of the attack, and still more, the number of his assailants rendered any resistance on the marquis' part useless.

"You see, I am not alone," said Schiba coldly; "do not threaten, but listen."

"First of all, tell these men to unhand me; I have no weapon, so you have nothing to fear, either you or they."

Schiba made a sign, and the marquis was set at liberty.

"Now, what do you want with me? Is it my life, or my purse, you wish to take?" said Sanchez as soon as he was liberated.

"Neither the one nor the other. Do you take us for highwaymen?"

"Yes, for I begin to think I have fallen into some snare."

"The snare is not for you."

"Who is it for then?"

"For your rival, George de Maurange."

"This note which I have just received, is it not false?"

"No; your heart has answered that already, since you are here, and you suspect only half of the truth, since Clotilde has left your house."

"I must know everything! But again, for the last time, who are you?"

"The instrument which executes."

"And the hand which directs you?"

"Is a woman's."

"A woman's?"

"Yes, a woman's and one who has loved George and wishes to avenge herself on the marchioness and you."

"But my wife cannot love this traitor?"

"She does love him."

"She cannot be with him?"

"She is."

"The proof! ah! the proof!" cried Sanchez.

"We shall take you to the very place where they are at this moment—if you will."

"Let us go."

"One moment. Have you the courage?"

"You can see for yourself. Yes, I will witness my own shame, and drink this cup of bitterness to the very dregs."

"Will you consent to have your eyes bound?"

"Do it."

"That is not all. You must swear not to remove the bandage, under any pretext, before I give you permission to do so."

"I swear it! Let us go."

"This oath is not sufficient."

"Do you doubt my word?"

"No, but I distrust your impatience and temper."

"What more can I do to satisfy you?"

"A very simple thing; let your hands be tied behind your back, bound in this way, you cannot break your oath."

"And you swear I shall see the infamous villain!"

"Within an hour you will see him at Clotilde's feet; but if, while concealed, and watching their

interview, you make one movement, or raise your voice, you are a dead man!"

"Die without avenging myself on them, no never! You need not fear for me. I will be silent."

Two *bahis* bandaged the marquis' eyes, and bound his hands firmly behind his back. Then Sanchez felt himself lifted from the ground and some minutes later found himself lying on cushions which seemed to be borne swiftly along by men, whose rapid steps he could hear distinctly on the road. They had, in fact, put him in a palanquin. Schiba was reclining at his side without his being aware of it, and the *bahis* were following the road leading to the house inhabited by the unknown. In half an hour they stopped, and Sanchez felt they were leading him into a room the warmth of which offered a grateful contrast to the sharp wind whistling through the trees outside.

"Not one word, not a movement," said Schiba in a warning voice, "and wait."

The khansaman gave some orders in a low voice to the *bahis*, and leaving the marquis, entered another room where the unknown and George, who was standing near Clotilde, who was still asleep, awaited him.



GEORGE DREW CLOTILDE'S LOVELY HEAD DOWN ON HIS SHOULDER AND PRESSED
A LONG KISS ON HER LIPS. P. 350.

"He is there, mistress; let us make haste."

"Be careful to play your role well," said the unknown to George.

The latter said not a word. He was very pale. Completely under the ascendancy which Schiba and his mysterious companion exercised over him, stimulated by the bait of the three millions offered to him, desirous of revenging himself on d'Aviella, who had won from him the beautiful woman now so near him, his emotion almost overpowered him.

"Come, be brave," said Schiba to him, "you are going to avenge yourself and win a fortune with one blow, that is to say, taste two pleasures at the same time."

"But who is going to kill the marquis?" demanded George in a trembling voice.

"Grief," replied the unknown.

Meanwhile, Schiba had lowered the lamps, and having made the marchioness again inhale the contents of a flask waited for some minutes. The unknown and de Maurange followed his movements in anxious silence.

After a short interval, Clotilde seemed to recover from the profound stupor into which she had been plunged. Her almost suspended respiration, became regular and more natural, and she seemed as

if making an effort to open her eyes; but at the very moment she was about to raise her eyelids, Schiba placed one of his hands on her forehead and with the other made some slow passes, which plunged the marchioness into a second sleep, but of a different nature from the first. Thus magnetised, Clotilde, under the khansaman's influence, assumed the look of a person languidly awakening from a pleasant dream. Her eyes slowly opened, and she fixed them on the mute witnesses of this scene without seeing them. She sat up on the divan where until now she had been lying.

"Place yourself there," said Schiba to George, who obeyed by kneeling down before the marchioness, and taking one of her hands in his.

When they were arranged in this way, the old Indian lighted all the candles standing on the mantel shelf, and having made a sign to the Unknown, who glided into the room, where Sanchez was waiting, he hid himself behind a drapery. Sanchez's impatience had arrived at its height during these preparations. Doubt, grief, and anger deprived him of all reasoning power. It seemed to him that he had waited a century, when one of the *bahis*, on a sign from the unknown, who disappeared immediately on giving it, undid his bandage.

The room in which the marquis found himself was dimly lighted. The *bahis*, still in silence, led him towards a heavy drapery, and having raised it, stood up immediately behind him.

Sanchez could then see into the room where George de Maurange was on his knees before Clotilde. Only a pane of glass separated them. On seeing them, Sanchez made a violent effort to stifle the cry of grief and rage that rose to his lips. Mastering his feelings by a superhuman effort of will, he listened.

"O, Clotilde," said George to the marchioness, "how can I ever repay you for having taken compassion on my despair, for having rewarded me for my patient waiting, for having listened to my heart! You are not a woman, you are angel, surpassing all others in beauty, and it seems to me as if Heaven had placed you on my road that I might have a taste of the happiness reserved for the elect. Speak, my own one, repeat once more the tender avowal of your love."

The marchioness remained motionless.

"I love you," she said mechanically, as if yielding to some invisible force.

Sanchez staggered backwards. The *bahis* supported him, and forced him to resume his former position.

"Oh! what happiness lies in those words!" said George. "After so many struggles and obstacles, to meet again, to belong to each other, what joy! You will never know, my poor heart, how I have suffered; jealousy has almost killed me; I thought you were lost to me forever; with that man, that Sanchez, appearing constantly before me like an abhorred specter."

"Do not let us speak of him," uttered Clotilde in the same strained tone.

"You are right, my life, let us forget all, and think only of our love. The world separated, but Heaven has reunited us. You have yielded, by coming here, to a love greater than that which rules vain and vulgar minds. And now that you are here, with me, your hands in my hands, now that I can cover them with kisses, and inhale the delicious perfume of your divine hair, O, my fair goddess! let your slave adore his idol as an angel and a woman in one."

At these words, pronounced in a tone of real emotion, but caused by feelings very different from those attributed to them by the marquis, George drew Clotilde's lovely head down on his shoulder and pressed a long kiss on her lips. Sanchez could no longer restrain himself.

"Kill me!" he said to the *bahis*, "kill me!"

At this moment Schiba reappeared.

"Did I speak the truth or not?"

Give me my poignard and let me kill myself;
I wish to die!"

"Without revenging yourself?"

"You are right; yes, I must be revenged on them! Oh! my God, how I suffer! I am dying!"

And overcome by the horrible constraint he had imposed on himself, during this scene, Sanchez fell back unconscious in the arms of the attendants. The noise of a carriage was at this moment heard in the yard.

"She is leaving," said Schiba. "Reconduct the marquis to the spot where we met him. The cool night air will help to revive him."

An hour later, Sanchez found himself lying extended on the grass near the little door of his own park where he had first encountered the khansaman and his companions, after having read the second anonymous note.

CHAPTER XXII.

DEMONIO.

The horrible plan of vengeance conceived by Schiba and the unknown which we have just seen partly carried into effect, had been conceived by them with deep art and perfidy and showed how perfectly they understood the irascible and vindictive disposition of the marquis. They had followed him about, studying his mode of life, watching for the propitious moment when they could strike most cruelly. As soon as they discovered his love for Clotilde Schunberg, they had removed every obstacle separating him from her, and when he had become her husband, they still persevered in their dark and patient hate, deferring the execution of their terrible plot, until the moment when the marquis' happiness should be complete, and in consequence, his despair and grief be all the more poignant, when he discovered the guilt of the woman he loved so passionately. In spite of the skill displayed by these persevering and cruel ene-

mies, Sanchez, had he possessed a well balanced mind, before condemning Clotilde, would have first sought to clear away his doubts, and the singular manner in which these events were accomplished must have awakened a natural desire to analyze the true designs of her accusers. But jealousy exercised such a sway over Sanchez that Schiba's plan was completely successful.

Madame Firmin had opened the window of Sanchez' room and during the absence of her master had allowed the old Indian to secret himself in the marchioness' room, where he had placed a bouquet sprinkled with a powder composed of the leaves of the upas and manchineel trees, which had plunged Clotilde, on inhaling the perfume arising from it, into a sleep so profound that the poor girl was rendered perfectly oblivious of all that was taking place around her.

When Sanchez recovered consciousness, astonishment at finding himself alone on the road at night, prevented him from realizing all that had taken place; but gradually, his memory returned, and again seizing his poignard which Schiba had returned to his side, he exclaimed:

"Yes, I must kill her!"

He was about to enter the little door of the park,

with the intention of rushing to Clotilde's room, without stopping to consider whether he would find her there, when Gomez pale, excited, his clothes in disorder, and armed with a carbine, appeared on the threshold at the same moment as his master.

"What! Is it you, Monsieur le Marquis?"

"Who are you?" said Sanchez wildly.

"I, Gomez."

"What are you doing here at this hour? Were you following her?"

The steward misunderstood.

"Yes, for do you know what it is? it is hydrophobia; he must be killed, my poor Demonio. You understand, monsieur, do you not?"

The same prolonged howl which had attracted Clotilde and her companion's attention on their return from the chateau de Pardieux, broke the silence of the night.

"The veterinary surgeon from Amboise had hardly told me, when Demonio, in a sudden access of fury, broke his chain, and fled into the woods," said Gomez. "I went at once for my gun, and have been hunting for the poor animal but, as if warned by instinct that I was calling him to his death, each time he hears my voice, he runs away from me, without giving me time to take proper aim."

"Hydrophobia!—He has hydrophobia, your dog, Gomez," said Sanchez with a singular accent.

"Just as I said, Monsieur le Marquis; I do not know what to do; he will sow the seeds of death wherever he goes if he is not killed before daylight."

"Return to your room, Gomez; I shall see to everything."

"You, Monsieur le Marquis, you run into such danger?"

"Go back, I tell you, I wish it!"

While speaking, the marquis and his steward had regained the front entrance to the chateau. Sanchez spoke in such a tone of fierce authority that there was nothing left for the steward to do but to obey in silence. He went up the little tower, while Sanchez slipped up by the back staircase into the marchioness' oratory. The idea which he had conceived was horrible; a frightful thought had just entered into his heart, now rendered implacable through jealous rage. A suppressed laugh, infinitely more terrifying than any paroxysm of anger, convulsed his throat and lips; he crept along the staircase of his own house like a thief. The chateau was lighted up by the bright moonlight streaming through the windows. Arrived at the oratory, he darted a strange glance

at Magnet lying asleep on her favorite cushion, then passed into Clotilde's bedroom. His young wife was in bed, and sleeping as calmly as a child. The marquis drew near and gazed at her for some moments in silence. Clotilde's lips moved as she murmured:

"Sanchez!"

But this evident mark of her love, which might have proved to the jealous anger raging in his heart and thoughts, that he was wrong, far from calming d'Aviella redoubled his wrath. He glared at Clotilde with a look of scorn and hatred, and in a threatening voice he muttered: "Wretch!" as he raised his poignard. But he as quickly lowered it, and again the same smile, impossible to describe, played around his lips; quickly regaining the oratory, he seized Magnet, holding the muzzle so as to prevent the little creature from uttering a cry, and returned to his room.

There he lighted the fire, place the poker in the glowing coals, put on a pair of thick hunting boots, armed himself with a pair of pistols, and having wrapped some handkerchiefs round his wrists, fixed his poignard firmly in one of them; then seizing Magnet, he left the chateau, directing his steps towards the spot where at long intervals Demonio's

agonized howls could be heard. When he had gone some distance, a dark figure appeared at the marchioness' window. There had been a witness to Sanchez's visit. The unknown had concealed herself behind the drapery which had served as a hiding place for Schiba some hours before. Pale and shuddering, she had seen Sanchez lift his poignard over his young wife's heart. She had closed her eyes in horror, and only opened them when she heard him leave the room. Then, she had hastened to the bed and seeing her still sleeping calmly with a smile on her lips, made a gesture of profound astonishment and advanced towards the window. Very soon, the ladder was replaced by the *bahis*, and the unknown rejoined Schiba in the garden.

"He has not killed her!" she said. "Can you understand it? Yet I thought the end had come at last."

"He has left the chateau; return with the *bahis*, mistress; I shall follow him."

With these words they separated, and the old Indian, with astonishing agility considering his great age, followed in the track of the marquis whom he soon perceived walking quickly in the direction of a small wood, situated at a quarter of

a league from the chateau. Sanchez' face was livid; his bloodshot eyes wore a dangerous expression full of frenzy and firm resolve. He arrived at the opening of the wood without noticing that he was followed, and unhesitatingly entered it. The fierce howling of the enraged and suffering animal came more clearly to his ears. This sinister sound sent a chill through Sanchez' whole frame, but he still hurried forward, breaking with frantic haste the branches that intercepted his onward path. At last, the man and beast were face to face. Demonio presented a terrifying appearance.

His aggressive appearance did not intimidate the marquis, more than the approach of the jaguar on his midnight hunts.

"Demonio, here!" he called out authoritatively walking up to the bull-dog.

At the sound of the familiar voice, the latter stood up and gave a loud yell, more ferocious and piercing than any he had yet given, but he did not move. Sanchez went forward a few steps; then, when about two paces from the terrible animal, he held Magnet out to him, who trembled in every limb, whining pitiously and excited Demonio by voice and gesture. The bull-dog remained immovable. Three different times the marquis renewed

his attempts, and three times Demonio howled, then hung down his head. Sanchez at last, seizing his pistol, fired, and wounded the dog in the leg. Fury succeeded Demonio's apathy.

With one bound, he sprang at the marquis.

Then a terrible struggle ensued; presenting his fist bound up with handkerchief's to all the dog's attacks, Sanchez saved himself from being bitten by him, but by a skilful feint, which Sanchez's own excitement and haste prevented him from foreseeing, Demonio caught him by the leg, making his jaws meet in the tender flesh, where, in spite of the thick leather boots, two poisonous teeth penetrated, inflicting a deep wound on the marquis.

With one stroke of his poignard, Sanchez stretched the bull-dog at his feet, cutting his throat open from which the dark blood flowed thickly; then, while Demonio lay gasping out his life, he again held out Magnet, who until then had escaped injury. One of the little creatures paws entered the dog's mouth, to whom excess of suffering gave back a last remnant of strength, and giving a snap at the marchioness' little favorite, he inflicted a slight wound.

Sanchez rose from Demonio's dead body, and watched the blood flowing from Magnet's wound

with savage joy as he retraced his steps; then, instead of endeavoring to make the flow of blood more abundant, he brought the parts together, so that the rabid virus might not escape from the wound.

Ten minutes later, he was in the marchioness' oratory, and slipping Magnet in his wife's room, he gently closed the door. Then only, he thought of himself, regained his apartment, and having uncovered his wound, cauterised it with the poker, which during his absence had become of a white heat.

Schiba had lost nothing of the scene in the little wood. When the marquis was on his way back to the chateau, the old Indian approached the dead body of the dog, examined it by the light of a dark lantern, which he carried with him, and glancing in the direction Sanchez had gone with a look of horror.

"Oh!" he cried to himself with a shudder, "I understand all now; more terrible, more implacable than ever!"

Then, after a moment of hesitation:

"All the better," he added. "Our vengeance will only be the more complete."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER THE VENGEANCE.

The terrible night during which these frightful events we have just related were accomplished, had given place to-day, when excess of fatigue conquered the marquis' anxieties and forced him to sleep. But this repose proved even more painful for Sanchez than his waking anguish. A hideous panorama of frightful dreams, all his life seemed to pass in review before him, in somber threatening colors, and each one of the fatal events appeared even more sinister than the reality. The ravine in Brazil where he had killed Lakhmi, the alley in the Bois de Boulogne where George de Maurange had fallen by his hand, ending in Clotilde's room where she was threatened through the presence of Magnet, by the most horrible of deaths, succeeded each other alternately, peopled by livid, mocking phantoms, hiding their skeleton heads under masks reproducing the features of the three beings on whom he had wrecked such awful ven-

geance. These terrifying visions, these dreams of blood, mingled with tears of remorse, lasted until the marquis was awakened from his painful sleep by the entrance of Gomez into his room.

A splendid autumn sun poured its rays into the room. Had it not been for this dazzling light, the marquis, still under the influence of nightmare, might have taken the steward for a phantom. As it was, his forehead was bathed in a cold perspiration and his features still wore such a disturbed expression, that Gomez exclaimed:

"What has happened, what is the matter with you, Monsieur le Marquis?"

"Nothing," replied Sanchez roughly. "I am glad you woke me. What o'clock is it?"

"Midday. Madame la Marquise is waiting lunch for you."

At the mention of his wife's name, d'Aviella's eyes flashed, and he turned deadly pale.

"Are you ill, have you been hurt?" asked Gomez anxiously.

"There is nothing the matter, I tell you; you may leave me."

"And Demonio?"

"He is dead. I killed him; leave me."

The steward obeyed. Finding himself alone,

Sanchez allowed his head to drop between his hands. He recalled everything now, and a world of thoughts rose to his mind. Hatred and anger took the lead of all other sentiments which agitated him. When at last he was ready, he hesitated a long time. A few steps only separated him from Clotilde, from the false wife, as he mentally stigmatized her. He recoiled from meeting and seeing her again by the light of day for the first time since her supposed crime, but overcoming his agitation and assuming as well as he could his ordinary demeanor, he descended to the dining-room. The marchioness was waiting for him, attired in a beautiful morning toilette which enhanced the effect of her fresh young beauty.

This had no effect on the marquis, and his manner towards her was even coldly polite, for which the unfortunate Clotilde could find no reason. Her calm, quiet manner only served to feed his hatred as he could only regard it as a total absence of all proper feeling. Two days later, when Clotilde had held out her hand to him:

“What is the matter?” he asked in a tone she could not define.

“Nothing very much; only Magnet bit me. I have punished him.”

The crime was accomplished but the knowledge that he had struck the blow failed to move Sanchez.

He glanced more than once at his victim in a singular manner but she did not notice it; and after scarcely touching the dishes offered him he went out shooting with Gomez. From that day in spite of the active life he led the marquis, although he congratulated himself on what he had done, had not one hour of repose. Clotilde, towards whom her husband's manner was completely changed, tried in vain to imagine the cause of his singular conduct.

Although believing he had punished the most unworthy of women, the sight of this beautiful young creature, smiling and gay, who unconsciously carried in her system the germ of the most horrible of deaths, froze the blood in his veins and brought on paroxysms of remorse and rage impossible to describe. At times he was tempted to give free vent to his indignantion, go to Clotilde and denounce her, terrify her by telling her that he knew all, and also, in what a terrible manner he had revenged himself. Then again, the approaching dénouement of his gloomy tragedy, made him tremble in spite of himself.

In imagination he already heard the first cry uttered by the unhappy victim when the disease de-

clared itself, saw her, pale and haggard and looking like a corpse, or attacked by fits of mad fury, and he made up his mind that when that terrible hour came, he would fly. At last, in spite of all he had seen and heard, the love which Clotilde evinced for him, her sweet, calm beauty, the melancholy caused by his coldness, brought grave doubts to Sanchez's mind. And then the old hatred he bore to George de Maurange was again rekindled in his heart.

Undisciplined minds cannot argue logically.

D'Aviella admitted in odd moments, the possibility of Clotilde's innocence; and yet, he did not cease, for one moment, to accuse George of having stolen her heart. Every morning he went off with Gomez on the pretence of shooting; but the finest partridges might rise at his approach, the marquis strode along without attempting a shot. Gomez, who was at a loss what to attribute his singular conduct to, dealt destruction around and soon filled his bag.

Shooting, besides, was a mere pretext on Sanchez part. The real motive of these long walks in the country was to discover some trace of George. The more he reflected on what he had seen, the less he could explain to himself the end these mys-

terious men had in view who had been his guides on that fatal night. His thoughts reverted to Count de Pardieux's chateau, but the president and his wife had returned to Amboise, and the chateau was now empty. Finding it impossible to discover the house in which he believed Clotilde had been basely betrayed, Sanchez gave up all hope of revenging himself on George. He was a prey to sudden feelings of terror, inexplicable to any one who might have witnessed them. This occult power only seemed more formidable in his eyes, because he could not define its aim, and he believed himself continually surrounded by enemies or spies.

The marchioness, at last broken-hearted by the inexplicable conduct of her husband, made an opportunity of speaking to him and spoke with such an accent of truth, that Sanchez' convictions were more unsettled than ever. He left her, almost ready to ask for forgiveness, his heart filled with remorse and anxiety.

A month had now passed since the fete at the chateau de Pardieux.

Late one night on entering his room, under the influence of a more acute grief than any he had yet experienced, a letter lying on the table attracted his attention. He shivered as he examined it, for

he recognized the writing; it was similar to what had appeared on the anonymous notes. He tore it open and eagerly devoured the lines which were as follows:

"Jealousy and anger mislead the heart of man. Before accusing he ought to see and hear for himself, and having seen and heard, ought still to doubt."

The perusal of this missive redoubled the marquis' anxiety by awakening the wildest hope in his heart that his wife was innocent; but supposing she was innocent, what had he done? He stood a long time motionless, crushing the fatal note in his hand, recalling the scene of love which he had witnessed, and feeling his jealous suspicions gradually disappear. His powers of endurance were at an end. He wished to see Clotilde, speak to her, and in spite of the advanced hour, he went to the marchioness' room, and entered it softly. At the noise made by his entrance, Clotilde, who was lying on a lounge weeping silently, removed the handkerchief which she held to her eyes, and displayed a face bathed in tears. They looked at each other in silence for a moment, Sanchez wildly, Clotilde in surprise at seeing him come into her room so late. The marchioness' tears chased away all

remorse from d'Aviella's heart; he only saw a guilty wife in the unfortunate victim.

"You are weeping because of your crime!" he said advancing to where she lay.

"My crime!" repeated Clotilde, not understanding.

"Yes, your crime, infamous woman!"

"Oh! my God!" said the marchioness in a state of stupor gazing at her husband with an expression of pity and terror.

"What crime?" she added, surprised beyond all measure.

"Don't pretend innocence. I know everything."

"But what?"

"You have deceived me!"

"Sanchez!"

"You have deceived me. I know it. I saw you."

"Sanchez, try to recover your senses, I beg of you. You have lost your reason; what do you mean by this frightful joking? What horrible trial do you wish to submit me to? I implore you, speak."

"I have told you all. But, I have avenged myself," and advancing nearer, he looked at Clotilde with such a threatening expression that she felt faint with helpless terror.

Overcoming her emotion she continued:

"Sanchez, I love you, and I have never loved anyone but you, I swear it. You accuse me of the most odious crime a woman can commit, and if I deign to defend myself, it is because I love you with all my strength. I have deceived you, you say? Look at me, and tell me if I have the face of a wife false to her vows."

As she said these words, she seized the marquis' hand and leading him towards the mirror placed herself so that the light fell directly on her features. The innocent protestation of her face overcame Sanchez, already half convinced by the truthful and noble manner in which Clotilde pronounced her defense. All his love was re-awakened, and with a sudden movement, he drew her to his arms, but just as he was about to press his lips to Clotilde's, he suddenly pushed her away from him violently, as he cried out in despair:

"But I saw, I heard all, I tell you."

This declaration, which he repeated for the second time, renewed Clotilde's anguish, causing her, as it did, to doubt her husband's sanity. She looked at him carefully, and the unhappy, but calm and convinced expression of Sanchez' face, proved to her that he had all his senses about him.

"Explain yourself; I do not understand what you mean. Accuse me in plain language. I will prove my innocence to you."

"You really wish me to speak?"

"I insist upon it, yes; speak."

"You met Monsieur de Maurange; you went to him, and there, wretched woman, while concealed in an adjoining room, I witnessed this scene, you told him that you loved him!"

"I?"

"Yes, you!"

"But when?"

"The night of Madame de Pardieux's last ball."

"Where?"

"I do not know; but I saw you, that I can swear."

The tone of conviction in which the marquis spoke, left no hope in Clotilde's mind of being able to convince him of his fatal error.

She sank into a chair feeling perfectly helpless, and despairing. Sanchez conceived this attitude to be an avowal of guilt.

"Oh! you infamous woman," he muttered hoarsely.

"My God! he believes it!" wringing her hands in agony.

"You will not even confess, wretched woman!"

"Listen to me," said the marchioness rising with an air of despairing energy; "by the soul of my dead mother, I swear to you that I do not know what you are speaking about. I have never even seen Monsieur de Maurange, except in Madame de Pardieux's house, and the night you accuse me of having gone to meet him, I, your wife, who loves you, I was here in my own room, and under no other roof."

"Enough," interrupted Sanchez.

"Yet one thing more!"

"Another lie, or false oath—it is useless!"

"In mercy! in pity! there is some inexplicable mystery in this which we will discover one day; jealousy has misled you; do not listen to its pernicious voice, think of our past happiness. I, deceive you, just think of it, is it possible?"

Even as she spoke, Clotilde had dropped on her knees, and vainly tried to seize one of her husband's hands.

Leave me!"

"Well then, kill me, if you believe me guilty."

A pale smile passed over the marquis' lips.

"Kill you," he exclaimed, "kill you!"

"Yes, I prefer death to your undeserved scorn."

"Be content, it will come." And Sanchez hurried out of the room after making this terrible speech.

For three days, he left the chateau at daybreak, still in search of the house to which Schiba and the *bahis* had conducted him; but even while he persisted in his efforts, he acknowledged to himself the uselessness of his quest. He had never lifted the bandage from his eyes until the moment he had seen George at Clotilde's feet, and from that instant until he found himself lying extended at his own gate, he remembered nothing.

After the violent scene we have just described, Clotilde had never been able to leave her own room.

After forty-eight hours of fever, she had recovered her ordinary composure, and surmounting all the natural scruples of an unjustly accused wife, she wrote a most touching and eloquently tender letter to Sanchez. This had more effect on the marquis than her words, but still he never came near her. Then, with a persistence worthy of a saint, sacrificing everything for the one hope of regaining his love, Clotilde sent a letter daily to Sanchez.

The exquisite tact displayed by the young

woman in this correspondence, the persuasive eloquence of her simple and touching words, brought the marquis little by little, to the point of asking himself if he had not been the dupe of some infernal and deep laid plot. He even began to curse his vengeance and to hope it would not be followed by any serious consequences.

Clotilde's health had not declined in any noticeable way. Twenty times, the marquis had secretly followed her in her lonely wanderings in the park. The noble carriage of his young wife in her resigned grief, pleaded her cause eloquently. All these incidents began to tell on Sanchez; but when listening only to the promptings of his old love, he felt as if impelled to return to her, a horrible anxiety withheld him.

Could Clotilde escape from the deadly wound inflicted through Magnet's bite? Or might she, at any moment, be attacked by the symptoms of hydrophobia? This was what the marquis asked himself unceasingly, imploring God to work a miracle, and save her he had loved, and whom, in spite of his suspicions, he felt he still idolized.

One morning, tortured by this horrible thought, he went to a celebrated physician in Amboise called Caron. The man of science revived his courage

by telling him that any person bitten, would at the expiration of a month, or five weeks, have almost complete certainty of having escaped from the dreaded evil. The marquis, who had asked for this information on the pretext of wishing to elucidate an interesting question, and one on which he purposed writing an article, left the doctor in high spirits. But his spirits were not fated to last long. On entering the chateau, Madame Firmin informed him that the marchioness had been suddenly taken ill, that she could not succeed in calming her, and that she had not been able to leave her bed since morning.

Sanchez first impulse at this news, was to rush to Clotilde, but he felt he had not the courage. He went to his own room and locked himself in. Then commenced for him the most frightful torture a man can endure. The most acute mental agony assailed him. He never for one instant doubted that his wife's illness was his own devil's work, and terror paralyzed his limbs, while the perspiration stood in drops on his forehead. He fell, crushed with remorse into a chair, listening to what was taking place in the room above him with painful intensity.

For three hours he remained in this position,

motionless, his mind alternating between the hope that he was deceiving himself, and the fear that he had divined but too correctly. Then, recalling all his wrongs, he paced the room fiercely, repeating to himself a thousand times, that the chastisement was equalled by the crime, and that God ought to absolve him from any guilt. He had so loved her! He had given her all, his heart, his soul, his life, and she had basely betrayed him, adding lies and cowardly, vile protestations to the odious crime she had committed. This woman, in spite of her innocent, saint-like look, was as low as the lowest of women, a reptile for whom any punishment was too slight. Thus he reasoned to himself, exciting his feelings of hatred so as to avoid thinking of what was taking place so near him.

Midnight struck. With the last stroke of the clock, a terrible cry, and strident yell as of some one in the agony of being strangled, echoed through the chateau. Sanchez stood rooted to the spot in terror, and glared wildly round the room. A second cry quickly followed. His hair seemed to stand erect on his head with horror, and all life within him seemed to collapse.

"I must fly; she is dying," and seizing a poignard which lay near him, to defend himself against the

imaginary enemies created by his terror, he was about to escape from his room, when a window pane was suddenly smashed violently. A hand was passed through the opening, the sash window which reached down to the ground was opened, and a woman, wearing a mask, appeared, her figure plainly defined against the darkness of the night.

"The magician!" exclaimed the marquis recognizing the mysterious woman of the masked ball at the Baroness de Lunèville's."

"Listen to what I have to say," said the masked woman to Sanchez. "Your wife is dying the most horrible of deaths; it is you who have killed her, because you thought her false, and yet your crime horrifies and terrifies you."

"It is true. Well?"

"Your wife is innocent!"

"Ah! that is impossible! You lie!" cried the marquis wildly.

"Not so. She was carried away from here under the influence of a narcotic, and when you heard her tell George de Maurange that she loved him, she was in a mesmeric sleep."

"Great God! What infamous villains!"

"And do you, Sanchez, Sanchez the murderer, know who has done all this to avenge herself? It

was I!" added the magician, removing her mask.
"Do you not recognize me?"

Sanchez hesitated a moment, then after having gazed steadfastly at the unknown:

"Ah! Lakhmi!" he gasped, and gave a terrible cry.

And he rushed madly at her, with raised poignard.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LIVING TO KILL.

How had the slave of former days, she who had loved the unfortunate Dominique, escaped death, and become the rich and powerful unknown, having under her command Schiba and the *bahis*? Let us explain.

During the siege of Seringabatam, an English major, Sir Edgar Sampton, eloped with the wife of one of the principal officers of the Sultan of Mysore, Tipoo Sahib, and in spite of the continuous and unremitting search of Baxio, Sahib, the officer in question, and of his faithful khansaman, Schiba, the beautiful Nahoua and her lover succeeded in escaping his just anger.

From the moment that Baxio-Sahib became convinced that Nahoua and Sir Edgar were not at Seringabatam, he, at Schiba's suggestion, who was as desirous of punishing the major as his master, left Mysore, with the object of finding and punishing the betrayer of Nahoua.

Schiba encouraged Baxio's anger and hatred to the best of his power, for he himself had secretly, but hopelessly, loved the beautiful Nahoua.

Schiba was a *psylla*, that is to say, a snake charmer, versed in all the medical and occult sciences, whose life Nahoua had saved and afterwards taken into her service.

So he had readily consented to follow Baxio in his pursuit for vengeance, but not before he had made him solemnly promise to forgive Nahoua.

Persuaded that the fugitives had taken the road to Calcutta, it was to this town they first went. But in spite of their expeditious traveling and their promptitude in leaving Seringabatam, on arriving at the capital of Bengal, they learned that the major, after sending in his resignation to the governor general, had left the evening before for England.

Eight days later, Baxio and Schiba sailed for Europe. On arriving in London, no trace could be discovered of the fugitives, and they searched for them in vain. Then, for ten long years, they traveled through Great Britain, without allowing themselves to be discouraged, but without being able to find the slightest trace of those they were in search of.

At last they heard, that some years before, the major having realised all his fortune, had left England, and that since that date, he had never been seen in his native country.

They then visited, successively, France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Spain and Belgium, but in vain. Year followed year, and neither Baxio nor Schiba lost courage. They had solemnly sworn to kill the major, and lived only with that purpose in view.

At the expiration of twenty-five years, tired of the fruitlessness of the search, they returned to Calcutta. Baxio purchased a palace there, had it sumptuously furnished and shut himself in it, sad and solitary, like a wounded tiger. Again several years passed, during which neither the old chief nor Schiba permitted one day to pass without offering up prayers to Brahma to aid them in discovering their enemy.

Although they acknowledged the obstacles in their way to be all but insurmountable, yet their faith in the accomplishment of their vengeance was so great that they still continued to hope.

One morning, Schiba entered in a state of breathless excitement. Chance had placed within their reach, what they had been so ardently trying

to discover for nearly half a century. He had encountered an old English ship captain on the wharf, with whom he had entered into conversation. Among other subjects, they had discussed the siege of Seringabatam, and after a few words the Indian had learned that the man with whom he was conversing, had commanded the vessel on which Sir Edgar Sampton and Nahoua had sailed for Europe. The captain remembered the facts perfectly. Besides, Sir Edgar had traveled under his own name, and as to Nahoua, the old sailor himself had been so struck with her great beauty, that he was even now able to give Schiba an exact description of her features.

"She was a most beautiful woman," he said in conclusion, "and the major adored her. I am certain that if they are still alive, they are as perfectly happy as any couple can be in this world."

"And what makes you think that?"

"The constancy of their love. I met them again five years after they made this passage with me."

"In England?"

"Oh! no at the other end of the world, in Brazil, near Fernambone, where they were living."

This was all that Schiba wanted. This time, he knew the retreat of his enemy. He told Baxio

of his discovery, and they immediately resolved to embark for Rio. The information furnished by the captain, turned out to be perfectly correct. After spending two years in England, Sir Edgar, who was perfectly happy with Nahoua, had noticed with alarm that her health was declining. A celebrated physician whom he consulted, declared that a longer residence in the English climate would kill the young Indian. Sir Edgar at first thought of Italy; but the man of science declared that the climate was not warm enough for the beautiful girl, and soon after, the major had left for Brazil, where he had bought a large plantation. Exile from his own country did not frighten him; his country, his happiness, was Nahoua.

When Baxio and Schiba landed at Rio, they had no difficulty in discovering Sir Edgar's retreat. They left immediately for Fernambone and arrived at the major's plantation. Everything was shut up. They asked a black where Sir Edgar was, and the latter replied:

"He is dead."

"It cannot be!" cried Baxio with a yell of rage.

"Dead!" echoed Schiba, standing as if rooted to the ground.

"Yes, he died eight days ago."

"And his wife?"

"She was buried a month ago."

"Where were they buried?"

"I can show you their tomb."

An hour later, the black pointed out to the Indians, a sumptuous mausoleum, on which they read the names of Sir Edgar Sampton and Nahoua. Then all Baxio's energy seemed to vanish, and Schiba had great difficulty in sustaining him. They remained before the tomb until the night was far advanced, without being able to tear themselves away from the spot which concealed their one hope they had had in life: the possibility of assuaging their thirst for vengeance. At last, the storm and rain which was descending in torrents, made them think of retracing their steps. The lightning flashed across the heavens, illuminating their grave, dismayed figures. Not a word passed between them. Each was lost in thought.

"My revenge is snatched from me," at last muttered Baxio, with an indescribable accent of regret.

Calm once more reigned around. Schiba leaned against the door of the mausoleum with head uncovered, trying to cool his fevered brow. He remained there a long time, looking absently at the landscape. Then, remounting their horses, they

were proceeding homewards, with their attendants, when on crossing a ravine, a singular sight met their astonished gaze.

By the side of a dead jaguar, was a young girl, whose right arm had been mangled by the ferocious beast, firmly bound to a tree. The khansaman rode forward, and dismounted from his horse. The young girl was not dead, but in a deep swoon.

The Indian drew out his knife and cut the cords that bound the captive, then lifting her carefully, he had her transported on an improvised litter. The young Brazilian's wound was horrible, but Schiba saw that by amputating the arm below the elbow, her life could be saved. Baxio agreed with him.

When the wounded girl regained consciousness, she was lying on a soft bed in one of the principal hotels of Fernambone. The operation was over. A wild feeling of terror seemed to possess her, and incoherent sentences escaped her. The words: "Crime, vengeance, and the name Dominique, rose continually to her lips, followed by painful paroxysms of excitement, that Schiba, with all his skill, found it difficult to soothe. Deeply interested in their young charge, the old Indian imagined a world of suppositions regarding the sufferer

whose fate chance had confided to their hands.

Schiba was the most clear sighted.

"Believe me, Sahib," said he, "the frightful state of this poor child is the result of an attempt at murder. How or why has it been committed? I cannot tell you; but where there is a crime, there ought to be a vengeance. Well, let us form a compact with this young girl, and let us swear to procure for her the supreme joy, that death, in striking Sir Edgar, has deprived us of."

This project awoke a new feeling of interest in Baxio's life, who welcomed the suggestion with joy. Schiba redoubled his care, but the body alone of the wounded girl recovered. Her reason was weakened, and when they took their departure for Calcutta, the young girl was received in Baxio's palace without having been able to offer them any explanation.

The young Brazilian's new surroundings gradually wrought a salutary change on her health, and six months after her arrival she was able to give a clear account of all that had happened to her deliverers. This recital is already known to my readers, for they must have recognized in the unfortunate captive, Lakhmi, the slave. Baxio and Schiba shuddered from time to time as she pro-

ceeded in her sad, cruel history. When at last, worn out with fatigue and emotion, Lakhmi stopped, Baxio said to her:

"And what do you wish to do now?"

"Rejoin my poor Dominique in Heaven!"

"Not so, my child. I also, have suffered and longed for death; but if you hate, it is your duty to live until satisfied hate kills you with joy. I have not been permitted to taste this infinite happiness; but I offer it to you. I have not many years to live. Consent to pass them with me as my daughter."

"Oh! master! what can I say? Your words confound me. To avenge Dominique, to make the marquis suffer for his cruelty towards me, yes, I acknowledge it, that would be unlooked for happiness!"

"Swear not to leave me, and you will taste it, Lakhmi."

"I swear it, master, by the soul of Dominique."

"And nothing will make you forswear your vengeance?"

"Nothing, I will only live to accomplish it. Once my vengeance is accomplished, I will be ready to die."

"Very well then, from this day forth, my im-

mense fortune is yours. Schiba, you are witness to our compact; you are younger than I am, and will survive me, and if, in spite of the desire for vengeance Lakhmi now feels, her resolution ever wavers, you will support her failing courage."

"Yes, master, I swear it, and as a beginning, in spite of the distance which separates us, I will not lose sight of the Marquis d'Aviella, who hunts jaguars by offering young girls as a bait."

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

Baxio-Sahib died the same day that Sanchez and his mother left Brazil for the purpose of residing in France, after the death of the Marquis Alphonse d'Aviella. Baxio left a fortune of twenty millions of francs. During the six years which the young slave had lived under the old sepoy's roof, both he and Schiba had combined their efforts in order to nourish an implacable feeling of hatred in the young Brazilian's heart towards her lover's murderer.

Schiba heard of Sanchez departure for France. Immediately after the last duties had been performed to the dead chief, attending the burning of his body on the funeral pyre, which, on the banks of the Ganges, serves for this pagan custom, Lakhmi and Schiba left for France.

And now let us resume our recital where we left it off, that is to say, when having recognized Lakhmi in the magician, Sanchez armed with his

poignard had rushed at her. He struck her without meeting any resistance, and then hastened to Clotilde's room. When he arrived there, his young wife, the beautiful, unfortunate Clotilde, was no more. Madame Firmin, trembling and livid with terror, was on her knees, praying, near the bedside for the dead, while Gomez stood close at hand, with tears coursing down his bronzed cheeks. Sanchez gained his own room, wrote to his mother an account of all that had happened, also explaining the horrible tragedy to which his loved Clotilde had fallen a victim, and having offered up a short prayer to God, recommending to him his soul, he blew out his brains.

Lakhmi, who had fallen in George de Maurange's arms a few steps distant from the window, refused to leave the place, in spite of her extreme exhaustion caused by the blood which now flowed freely from the wound. From where she lay reclining on a bench, she could see plainly into the maquis' room. She waited until the last, and when the pistol shot sounded, exclaimed:

"At last! I have kept my oath!"

An hour later, de Maurange rang at the Notary Dupuys door.

No MINERAL WATER will produce the beneficial results that follow the taking of one of "Beecham's Pills" with a large glass of water immediately on rising in the morning.

SICK HEADACHE!

What a world of misery is embodied in the word! Physical and mental anguish combined! Why will people persist in suffering an evil which they can free themselves from permanently by the frequent use of

BEECHAM'S PILLS IN MILD DOSES?



There never entered the portals of any home, whether of prince or peasant, a more benign benefactor than this wonderful medicine—renowned throughout the world for its remarkable efficacy in relieving **Weak Digestion, Constipation, Sick Headache, Liver Complaint, AND OTHER DERANGED CONDITIONS OF THE VITAL ORGANS.** BEECHAM'S PILLS will certainly relieve persons suffering from the bad effects of overeating. They will surely DISLODGE BILE, STIR UP THE LIVER, CURE SICK HEADACHE AND FEMALE AILMENTS, AND WILL PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH.

Covered with a Tasteless and Soluble Coating.

Famous the World Over.

Ask for BEECHAM'S and take no others. Of all Druggists, or mailed for 25c. by

B. F. ALLEN CO., New York Depot, 365 Canal St.

CHICAGO AND EASTERN ILLINOIS R.R.



**SHORTEST AND QUICKEST ROUTE
AND THE
ONLY DOUBLE-TRACK LINE
BETWEEN**

**CHICAGO AND THE SOUTH
LIMITED VESTIBULED TRAINS**

Run Daily Between

CHICAGO AND NASHVILLE, TENN.

For Maps, Time Tables, Illustrated Guides, Sleeping Car Space
or any Information, apply to

CHICAGO CITY TICKET OFFICES:

**204 CLARK STREET and AUDITORIUM HOTEL,
OR TO**

CHARLES L. STONE,

Gen'l Pass. and Ticket Agent.

**General Offices: First National Bank Building,
CHICAGO.**

TRADE

That ancient machine of thine
For Wheeler & Wilson's No. 9.

WHEELER & WILSON MANUFACTURING CO.,

185 and 187 Wabash Avenue, CHICAGO

CANDY
CANDY
CANDY

Try the experiment of sending \$1.25, \$2.10 or \$3.50 for a box of the finest Candy in America, put up in pretty boxes suitable for a present. **EXPRESS PREPAID** from Denver East and Boston West. Visitors to Chicago should call and remember the loved ones at home.

C. F. GUNTHER, Confectioner,
212 State Street, - - - CHICAGO.

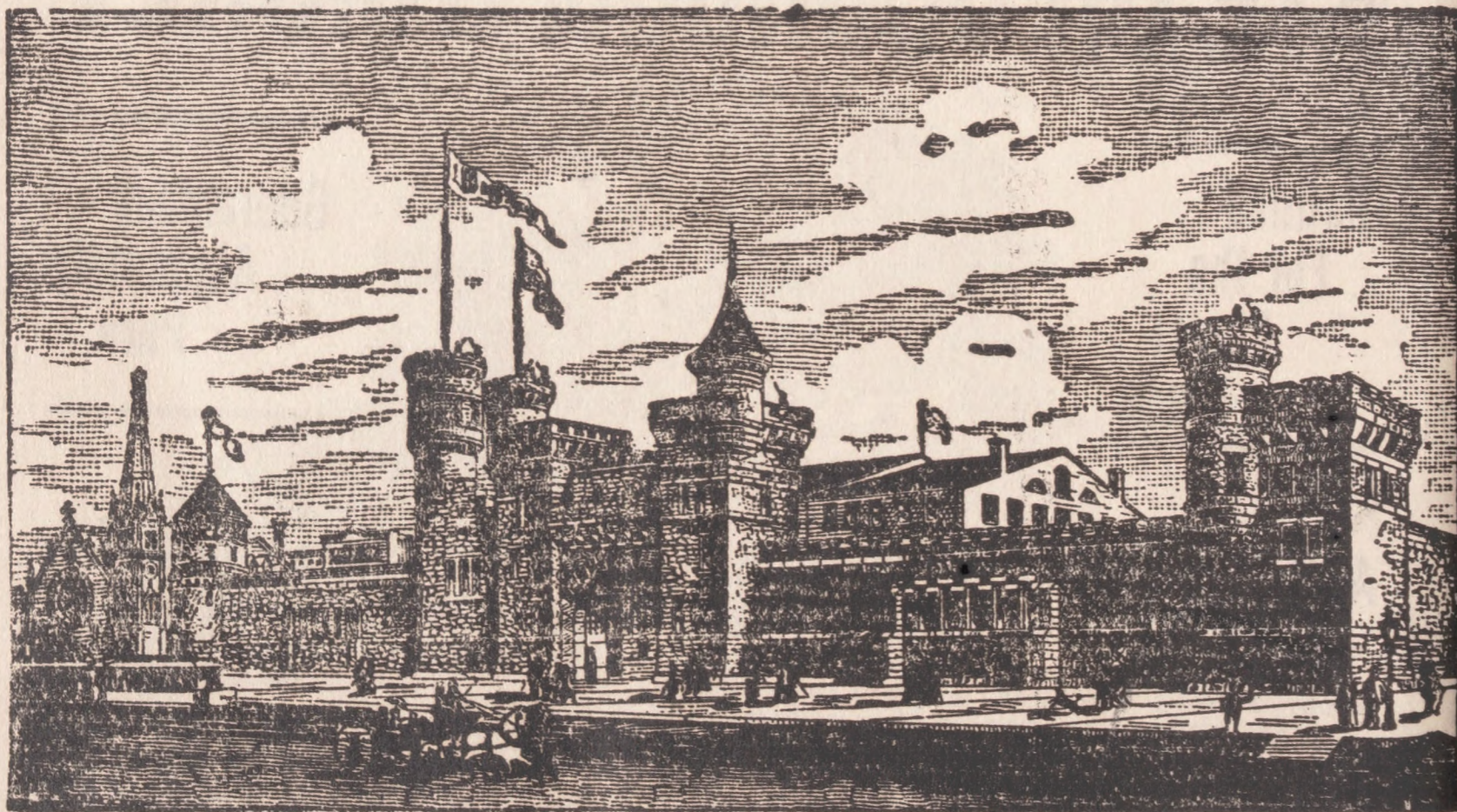
When you wish good ENGRAVING
Promptly and Properly executed call
upon us

METCALF STATIONERY CO.,

136 WABASH AVENUE,

CHICAGO.

Artistic Stationery for OFFICE & HOME.



LIBBY PRISON WAR MUSEUM.

Removed from Richmond, Virginia, in 1889 to **CHICAGO**, and converted into a great War Museum. The only one in America illustrating American heroism. A wonderful exhibition. Open daily and Sunday from 9 a. m. to 10 p. m.

WABASH AVENUE, BETWEEN 14th AND 16th STREETS.

No Animosity, No North, No South, but Union.

CALIFORNIA in 3½ Days

FROM CHICAGO

VARIABLE
ROUTE

TOURIST
TICKETS,

Allowing privileges never before accorded, can be obtained, together with full information, upon application to any Ticket Agent, or by writing the

GENERAL PASSENGER AND
TICKET AGENT,
CHICAGO.

ALL MEALS SERVED IN
DINING CARS.

PALACE DRAWING-
ROOM SLEEPING CARS
AND TOURIST SLEEPERS
ARE RUN THROUGH TO
SAN FRANCISCO
WITHOUT CHANGE
LEAVING CHICAGO
DAILY VIA THE

NORTH-WESTERN LINE

CHICAGO & NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

GOLD MEDAL, PARIS, 1878.

WALTER BAKER & CO'S

Breakfast Cocoa

FROM WHICH THE EXCESS OF OIL HAS BEEN REMOVED,
Is Absolutely Pure and it is Soluble.



No chemicals are used in its preparation. It has MORE THAN THREE TIMES THE STRENGTH of cocoa mixed with Starch, Arrow-root or Sugar, and is therefore far more economical, COSTING LESS THAN ONE CENT A CUP. It is delicious, nourishing, strengthening, EASILY DIGESTED, and admirably adapted for invalids as well as for persons in health.

615 ■■

Ask Your Grocer for it. Allow no Substitution.

WALTER BAKER & CO., DORCHESTER, MASS.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00023103588